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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE IMPACT OF POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE ON SCHOOL SUCCESS:
A PRINCIPAL'S SELF-STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY
SEAN MCNICHOLS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
MAY 2020

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The journey of this self-study has come with many triumphs and challenges navigating this long path toward the completion of only another chapter of my personal purpose to “Do something each day that enables human growth.” My purpose has and will continue to drive me in a direction to maximize my individual potential. This self-study was an incredible learning experience and would not have been possible without a huge group of supporters- first and foremost, my family.

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vitally important, presently. The scholars I have interacted with from the onset of my career and continue to work with inspire me as a model to maximize their potential. The school communities that I have been fortunate to learn from have helped carve out my path of humility. And, finally my immediate and extended family members, thank you for allowing me to reap the benefits of your love and support. Thank you for helping to illuminate my potential as I continue to determine my way on this path. Time can be a uniquely frustrating and forgiving, however, it can never be given back- I am looking forward to time with each of you. Linda and Joe, I hope you know how much I appreciate your example and model of an expectation that will never be fully realized. As our best friends and mentors, your time could never be measured.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this self-study was to examine how I, as a school principal and transformational leader, was able to support the development of positive relationships that impacted school culture and sustained student achievement. To do this, I focused on social and emotional learning while incorporating opportunities for school staff, parents, community members and student's voices to be heard through group meetings and forums. The analysis of this study impacted the guidance of recommendations for other leaders supporting their school culture for sustained academic success through positive relationship development. The following research questions were answered in this self-study:

- 1) How did my leadership foster teachers to form positive and supportive relationships with students?
- 2) Under my leadership, what were the challenges to fostering positive and supportive relationships?
- 3) How has my leadership changed, if at all, as understood by the five leadership practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2012)?

Through the self-study methodology I applied best practices and existing research to meet the challenges and unique needs of one elementary school in Chicago. This self-study was completed in a reflective manner which led to elevated respectful and trusting relationships aiding an overall increased supportive school environment. This reflective

journey was examined through the lens of Kouzes and Posner (2012), The Five Leadership Practices: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. The utilization of this conceptual framework has enhanced my leadership by continuous reflection and a critical analysis of my own leadership style and practice.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

My ambition with this self-study was to discuss and describe my experiences as a principal and transformational leader, attempting to support the development of positive relationships that impact the school culture while elevating school success. Reculturing a school involves the examination of beliefs, expectations, and assumptions for the purpose of school change that can facilitate a collective sense of purpose (DuFour & Burnette, 2002; Fullan, 2005). In some cases, creating a strong sense of urgency provides the impetus for change within the school community. According to Kotter (2012), establishing a sense of urgency means leaders are attempting to adjust the status quo by pushing employees to be removed from complacency and to help one another realize the critical nature of moving forward quickly. In Kotter's plan, urgency is the opposite of complacency and the driving force for efficient change. The culture of a school community is as fundamental to its success as the curriculum, interventions, and staffing (DuFour & Burnette, 2002). Sergiovanni (1994) suggests that a community is a collective in which the members are bound not only rationally by organizational structures but also by “felt interdependencies, mutual obligations, and other emotional and normative ties” (p. 218). Sergiovanni’s suggested definition raises the idea of teamwork and collegiality to new levels of interdependence.

Communities are collections of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound to a set of shared ideas and ideals. This bonding and binding is tight enough to transform them from a collection of *Is* into a collective *we*. As *we*, members are part of a tightly knit web of meaningful relationships. This *we* usually shares a commonplace and over time come to share common sentiments and traditions that are sustaining. (p. 218)

Sergiovanni (1994) explains that the need for community is inescapable.

Everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging, continuity, and true ownership. Our lives become more meaningful when we are connected to others who share similar ideals and values. Sergiovanni continues, “Community is the tie that binds students and teachers together in special ways, to something more significant than themselves” (p. xiii).

Building a positive and strong school culture among the entire school community depends upon a variety of factors such as: shared leadership, inquiry, honest dialogue, reflective practices and collaboration.

Every school has a culture, and every school has the ability to advance its culture. The culture of a school consists of the assumptions, habits, expectations, and beliefs of the school’s staff and exists as clearly as the school building itself (DuFour & Burnette, 2002). As the school leader, my first responsibility was to identify the core cultural elements, both positive and negative, then attempt to shift them so that student learning is improved and school success is sustained. I believe this begins with establishing and fostering positive relationships. According to Moore and Rudd (2006), transformational leaders motivate those around them to achieve greater outcomes than were originally intended or expected. Transformational leaders go beyond exchanging rewards for

performance by developing, stimulating and inspiring followers to adapt and align self-interests with the mission and vision of the organization (Howell & Avolio, 1993). There is a common assumption in meaningful school and workplace that the cultural shift in schools or in the workplace will provide meaningful opportunities. A common belief surrounding significant school improvement is that it begins with a cultural shift and this cultural shift begins with the school leader. My ability as a school leader to prioritize and facilitate a cultural shift through initiatives, such as a social and emotional team, social and emotional curriculums and stakeholder forums on this reflective journey were examined to demonstrate improvements to the school culture for sustained school and student success. The lens for this journey has been examined through the Five Leadership Practices: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Context for the Study

Renetta Elementary School (pseudonym) is located in the Chicagoland area of Illinois. Renetta Elementary School is a general neighborhood elementary school with students in kindergarten through eighth grade providing a unique learning experience with two separate teaching philosophies at the primary and upper-grades. The student body includes over 500 students and is 63% African American, 26% White, and 7% Hispanic. Students from Renetta School hail from a varied socioeconomic backgrounds and range from high poverty to affluent as indicated by the Family-Income forms completed by school families. The school's low-income percentage rests at 47%. This is a 9-point decrease from 2015. However, there has been a steady increase in the low-income status the past four years according to the Illinois School Report Card. The

school does allow students living outside of the school neighborhood boundaries via an application process through the Chicago Public Schools Office of Access and Enrollment. At the time of the study, there are over 500 students on the waiting list for one of the coveted seats. Families attempting to gain acceptance into the school from the waitlist must complete an application process with the Chicago Board of Education, Office of Access and Enrollment a year in advance. Students do not test to be placed on the waitlist, this is simply a general lottery. This is in contrast to the Chicago selective enrollment schools where students must meet a minimum testing requirement for acceptance.

The school community has been witness to a shift demographically over the past couple of decades with multiple teachers and staff members employed at the school during this demographic transformation. This established culture and underlying theme of race is rooted in the school community and bordering neighborhoods. Certainly, we may notice it, but most of the time we are so entrenched in our daily work we don't do anything about it. Barth (2002) offers a helpful description of culture when he tells us:

It is said that a fish would be the last creature on earth to discover water, so totally and continually immersed in it is he. The same might be said of those working within their school culture. By the time the beginning teacher waits the obligatory three years to speak out in a faculty meeting, she too, is so immersed in the culture that she will no longer be able to see with a beginner's clarity the school's cultural patterns of leadership, competition, fearfulness, self-interest, or lack of support. (p. 7)

The embedded school culture has endured demographic shifts with a consistent

presence of staff members who have demonstrated a fixed mindset. Carol Dweck (2016), “I have always been deeply moved by outstanding achievements and saddened by wasted potential” (p. ix). I was told prior to obtaining the principal contract that this is a “retirement home” for people and they will never leave once they get in the door. This dynamic has driven or had a hand in many of the structural decisions in place at the school. As some staff have said, “This is just the way we have always done it.” This fixed mindset by the adults has infiltrated the culture of the school and lowered the expectation for all students. This is confirmed by the 5 Essentials Survey conducted by The Chicago School Research (CCRR) that assessed the school’s Supportive Environment as “Neutral,” in response to the question, “Is the school safe and supportive with high expectations.”

The diversification of the neighborhood was heavily influenced in the early 1970s by the construction of nearly four hundred “Section 235” subsidized housing units, the largest of any Chicagoland neighborhood according to the Encyclopedia of Chicago (2005). The median income for the community is \$56,000. This is compared to the City of Chicago median income of \$38,000 (Demographics of Chicago, n.d.). Renetta School is almost an exact representation of the school community demographics. The area is 65% African American and 30% White (Census, 2014). The Illinois School Report Card (2015) indicates that Renetta School is 63% Black and 28% White.

This diversification of the area, although progressive since the 1970s, hasn’t infiltrated the school’s teaching and staff community. Predominantly, the staff is comprised of White females, most of whom live directly in the community or the surrounding neighborhoods of Chicago. The 2016-2017 teaching staff was 96% White,

4% African American. Overall, the staff was 30% African American. This percentage includes paraprofessionals, clerks, assistant principal and security guard, none of whom are male. As a newcomer to the school culture in the 2015-2016 school year, it was quite apparent that I had much to learn. According to Deal and Peterson (1999), school culture is described as “a school’s own unwritten rules, traditions, norms, and expectations.” A school’s culture permeates everything: “the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or they don’t and how teachers feel about their work and their students” (p. 2).

This self-study began with myself as a new leader and completely unfamiliar with the school staff and community, accepting my first principal contract. I assumed the role of principal in August of 2015. This school year was a time of confrontation, confusion and transition for the entire school community. I retained the previous assistant principal creating a new leadership team with what I thought was a knowledgeable foundation and significant change in style and demeanor. My four-year plan began with the year-one goal to establish relationships, gain resources and produce our responsibility to our expectations. This was all done on a foundation of reflection or as I liked to say leading with the “R’s” for the first year. Considering this context, Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), point out that the principal’s leadership is a key factor in supporting student achievement and is essential to building successful schools. Given the increased responsibility and accountability within our district as the instructional leader dictated a sense of urgency for a validated, research based leadership framework. The work of Kouzes and Posner (2012), although widely applied and accepted in business and nursing provided a model of leadership for a new elementary school principal. At the time of this study, I began

year number three of a four-year contract.

A new leadership team and another transition in year number three. This transition included a new assistant principal, new school counselor and a large staff reorganization put into place for the 2017-2018 school year. This marked another period of alterations, confusions and adjustments. As Kouzes and Posner (2012) illustrate to “challenge the process and enable others to act.” Our initiatives for the year included new practices, social and emotional curriculums and systems for students and staff. These new initiatives and practices were created with good intentions to have a positive impact on the school culture and elevating student achievement at Renetta Elementary School. One of the new initiatives at school focuses on restorative practices to positively adjust student behavior to build stronger relationships and ultimately, decreasing student misconducts. In turn, it was assumed that this would elevate the school experience for all stakeholders. Restorative practices are being used to address student misbehavior and teach positive behaviors while providing a common language for the school community. The International Institute for Restorative Practices (Wachtel, 2016) highlights both repairing relationships and proactively building relationships as tenets of restorative practices. The newly formed C.A.R.E Team is instituting these behavioral expectations. Additional support from a newly assigned restorative practices coach will deepen the impact of the school-based team. The R.P. coach will be working with the C.A.R.E team and school twice a week for 12 total weeks. The R.P. coach’s primary responsibility is to enhance the entire staff’s capacity and understanding to implement restorative practices and approaches to discipline. In addition, more closely coach the C.A.R.E Team and a handful of specific teachers in the school.

Problem Statement

The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCRR) reported at the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year that Renetta School in the Chicagoland area with 97.5% of the students participating (14.5% higher than the district student participation rate) that only 34% of the students surveyed indicated that the students and teachers shared a mutual respect for one another. The research also provided a “Neutral” status for the school for the assessment component of Supportive Environment. In addition to the lack of respect shared by students and teachers, the 2016-2017 newly formed school Behavioral Health Team (C.A.R.E Team) determined that 96% of all student misconducts submitted by staff members were written for African American students. Furthermore, of these student misconducts White staff members submitted the vast majority of misconducts written.

There has also been a huge decline in the amount of before and after school activities for students; virtually all after school programs have been lost. The school had numerous daily, weekly and monthly activities that staff supported and facilitated with students in the past. Opportunities for students to form relationships with staff members are nearly nonexistent in the non-academic classroom sense. Furthermore, resources have been cut due to budgetary constraints from the school to provide elevated support such as counseling and social skill development. As the population has shifted, the demands for increased social and emotional support have risen. Reculturing a school involves the examination of beliefs, expectations, and assumptions for the purpose of school change that can facilitate a collective sense of purpose (DuFour & Burnette, 2002; Fullan, 2005). The culture (assumptions, habits, expectations, and beliefs of the school’s

staff, DuFour & Burnette, 2002) at Renetta Elementary School is fractured and relationships are strained. The mindsets of staff and students within the school have to be altered and trusting relationships must be rekindled to decrease student misconducts and allow student achievement to be elevated. According to Fullan (2004), “Well-established relationships are the resource that keeps on giving” (p. 18). The creation of a social and emotional team, the use of social and emotional curriculum, the support of a Restorative Practices Coach along with student and parent forums will begin to address the challenges facing Renetta Elementary School.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this self-study is to examine how I, as a new school principal and transformational leader, am able to support the development of positive relationships that impact the school culture while elevating school success. This has been examined and assessed, specifically through reflections upon my own leadership priorities and initiatives. The investigation for the impact of this study will lead to recommendations for administrators to positively support school culture for sustained success. The initiatives included in this study are the creation of a school-based Behavioral Health Team (C.A.R.E Team), the use of social and emotional curricula, the support of a Restorative Practices Coach and student/parent forums aimed to elevate respectful relationships within the building. In the effort to address specific needs of staff and students for the second half of the 2017-2018 school year and planning for the following year specific initiatives have been established.

Significance

An essential element of principal transformational leadership is the innate ability to build trusting relationships and work with people. “To develop a community of difference, education leaders must take responsibility for developing a meaningful relationship with each person they encounter- student, teacher, parent, board member of legislator” (Shields, 2004, p. 39). When relationships are improved the opportunity for institutions to get better is presented. Focusing on relationships cannot be considered a quick fix for improving test scores. However, placing high attention to relationships is the foundation for sustaining improvement over the long run (Gray & Streshy, 2008). A principal must be able to motivate and inspire the disengaged veteran and while simultaneously nurturing and calming the high anxiety of the first-year teacher. Being able to foster relationships that engage and re-engage educators will have a profound effect on the climate of the school (Gray & Streshly, 2008). In the Bass model of leadership, four dimensions comprise transformational leadership behavior (Bass & Avolio, 1997) including Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration. Leaders demonstrate idealized influence with displays of conviction, emphasis on trust, commitment, purpose and resolution even in the face of difficult challenges (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Transformational trust as a function of Kouzes and Posner (2012) is illustrated through the fourth Practice of Exemplary Leadership, “Enable Others to Act.” Leaders must forge forward fostering an atmosphere of trust and human dignity to strengthen others providing a sense of optimism and power.

When teachers are not happy, then they don’t work well together, the morale goes

down they're grumpy and it shows in everything everybody does. The kids are affected. When teachers are not happy, they are rather dull and boring in front of a classroom. (Elementary Principal as quoted in Beaudoin & Taylor, 2004, p. 61)

At Renetta Elementary School in the Chicagoland area it was reported that only 34% of the students indicated that the students and teachers shared a mutual respect for one another. The school was also deemed to have a flat affect for students feeling supported with high expectations. In order for sustained school and student achievement to be a reality positive, trusting relationships must be established among each of the stakeholders within the entire school community. This process will be examined through the lens for this journey has been examined through the Five Leadership Practices: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

As a principal, one of my main responsibilities is to facilitate an environment where relationships between adults and students are truly collaborative and not simply collegial. Dufour and Burnette (2002) discussed that even though schools are filled with people, at times these environments can be one of the most isolating aspects of the profession. Kouzes and Posner (2012) describe encouraging the heart as a behavior that benefits individuals on a personal and professional level building relationships, removing feelings of isolation and elevating productivity. From the personal aspect, providing opportunities for employees to feel validated about one's accomplishments feed engagement and passion for the learning environment.

Schools, as Eaker (2002) has written can be described as a "group of independent contractors united by a common parking lot" (pp. 11-12). In the environment of district

mandates, misunderstood and criticized standards, high stakes testing and complicating curriculum the pressures on schools, their leaders, and the teachers has been elevated to an all-time high. These additional expectations often contribute to negativity, isolation, and censure amongst staff (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2004). Given these circumstances educators are engorged in a pressure cooker of limited time and resources. School leaders must promote the importance of interdependence and a shared purpose (collective efficacy) to further the development of positive relationships providing the opportunity for student success and achievement. Kouzes and Posner (2012) highlight this though the idea of shared vision and maintaining one's commitment to a shared goal.

Correlations between supportive adult relationships and school engagement have yielded positive results with negative correlations between supportive relationships and other risk factors (Woodley & Bowen, 2007). Programs that purposefully formed these supportive relationships (Converse & Lignugaris/Kraft, 2009) will demonstrate positive value. The additions of the C.A.R.E Team, R.P coach and the use of the social and emotional curriculum, along with school stakeholder forums/ meetings will have success to elevate engagement of staff and students.

Poor student engagement can be closely associated to poor student achievement. Brewster and Bowen (2004) define engagement in school as a “student’s affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses related to attachment, sense of belonging, or involvement in school” (p. 49). Balfanz et al. (2007) define disengagement as the “process of detaching from school, disconnecting from its norms and expectations, reducing effort and involvement at school and withdrawing from a commitment to school and to school completion” (p. 224). Other researchers, Finn and Zimmer (2012) describe

four dimensions of student engagement (Academic, Social, Cognitive and Affective).

Academic engagement, according to Finn and Zimmer refers to all aspects of the learning process such as the completion of work and participation in academic events. The second element, social engagement, focuses on student behavior. Examples for social engagement might include appropriate interactions with others, following the code of conduct and timeliness to school. Cognitive engagement refers to the degree to which a student rigorously involves him or herself in the learning; asking questions, grappling with challenging material, and pursuing information outside of the class covered content.

Lastly, affective engagement explains whether or not a scholar feels a sense of belonging and values the role of education in their personal life. Facets of all four dimensions have been significantly associated with academic achievement, indicating that the higher the level of student engagement, the higher the level of academic success (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Several studies have examined the interaction between school engagement and student success and found that attendance, participation in extracurricular activities, misbehavior, mobility, student beliefs and values and self-perceptions were all predictors of student success (Archambault, Janosz, Fallu, & Pagani, 2009; Griffiths, Lilles, Furlong, & Sidhwa, 2012; Rumberger & Rotermond, 2012). Opportunities for all stakeholders to have a voice in the decision-making process should elevate the levels of engagement and motivation with each of the involved participants.

Methodology

The approach chosen for this research is self-study. Self-study as a methodology has its foundation in teacher education and has been increasingly used by researchers/practitioners (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990;

Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008). Through reflective practice we are able to reinterpret and reframe our experiences from a different perspective (Russell, 1992). According to Hamilton et al. (2008), a self-study is “a look at self in action” (p. 17). Reflection is an essential component that brings understanding to the complex nature of classrooms (Zeichener, 1996). The complex nature of “classrooms” in my approach with this self-study will be my method as I examine Renetta Elementary School in the Chicagoland area.

My aspiration as the principal of Renetta Elementary was to determine and implement effective initiatives to positively support the school culture to sustain academic achievement and create an environment relevant for a successful school experience. More importantly, learn and identify aspects about myself as a leader through this reflective journey.

As put by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), “the aim of self- study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and set” (p. 20). This self-study methodology will provide the opportunity to apply best practices and existing research to the unique needs of my students in a reflective manner that leads to positive outcomes for Renetta Elementary School. More importantly, allows me to be a thoughtful and more perceptive leader. I want to make sure that my actions are consistently equivalent with my core beliefs and vision for the school. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) stated, I conducted an “intentional and systematic inquiry into my own practice” (p. 5). I chose this methodology because within its design is the opportunity to better align my leadership intents with my leadership actions. Barth (2002) tells us that a culture diagnostic can be ascertained by careful observation of all the things obviously seen, but

also often felt. Barth asks a series of questions in relation to school culture, I believe the use of these questions in relation to the document analysis will be important to support my understanding of this study as I examine the culture of Renetta School.

What do you see, hear, and experience in the school?

What don't you see and hear?

What are the clues that reveal the school's culture?

What behaviors get rewards?

Do the adults model the behaviors they expect of our scholars?

Who gets to make the decisions?

Do parents experience welcome, suspicion, or rejection when they enter the school? (Barth, 2002)

The questions above will be used in conjunction with the document analysis to reflect on this study with in conjunction with journal prompts (see Appendix A) while I reflect on my practice and synthesize my thoughts around different social and emotional initiatives. Hopefully, the initiatives will foster deeper, more meaningful relationships. I intend to utilize these questions while examining data and then reflecting on the bi-weekly parent, student and community meetings and forums. These questions should influence my ability to be more reflective on the school culture from the perspective of other key stakeholders and ensure that I remain consistent with my reflections. I will utilize specific prompts for my reflective journaling (see Appendix A).

The focus is to determine if the stated initiatives and practices instituted for the 2017-2018 school year positively support a shift to the school culture. Ultimately, the enhanced school culture will provide elevated social and emotional support for students

and produce positive student achievement outcomes. This research would then potentially support other leaders in the field as they set course on their leadership journey. In my leadership experience thus far and research one of the greatest barriers to meaningful cultural change is the break between what leaders say they value, and what they do. As Kouzes and Posner (2012) state, modeling the way: “Setting the example by aligning actions with shared values” (p. 29). The purpose of this self-study is to critically assess my abilities as a leader to positively impact the school culture while elevating school success.

The initiatives included in this study are the creation of a school-based Behavioral Health Team (C.A.R.E Team), the use of social and emotional curricula, the support of a Restorative Practices Coach and student/parent forums aimed to elevate respectful relationships within the building. All of these initiatives have been established to address specific needs of students and staff for the Spring of the 2017-2018 school year and planning for the following year.

The school-based Behavioral Health Team or C.A.R.E Team (Cougars Always Respect Everyone & Everything) was created in 2016-2017 as a function of the school need and the PBIS framework to facilitate social and emotional support through common school-wide expectations. This team consists of eight staff members ranging in grade levels and content areas along with a member from a community organization. The C.A.R.E Team began the 2017-2018 school year meeting weekly during lunch times and recently adjusted meetings to once a week after school. The team is responsible for instituting clear, school-wide expectations for restorative practices and incentives. The team will also be working with and collaborating with the RP Coach along with

monitoring the implementation of the social and emotional curriculum Second Step. This will be reintroduced as it was not utilized by the school for the past couple years. The Second Step Curriculum will be part of the everyday curriculum and align with monthly incentives and lessons around the International Baccalaureate (IB) Learner Profiles.

The parent, community and student forums will be completely new opportunities provide voice for stakeholders and elevate and empower them. The open forums will consist of an agenda with a series of specific questions and/ or less formal, open dialog opportunities to gauge the engagement and investment of our school community. The goal of these monthly student meetings and monthly parent meetings will be to empower and invite elevated voices into the decision-making process. The research will all be done within the normal school routine and professional practices at Renetta Elementary School. Documents will be collected from this normal daily work and will include professional development materials, meeting minutes and agendas with journal entries and publicly viewable student data being reflected on. This reflective analysis of those work products maintained and utilized will be will be used as evidence toward my leadership development according to the timeline (See Appendix A). Additionally, I will engage in critical friend interviews. These semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a colleague not affiliated or connected to the school. The protocols for these interviews can be found in Appendix D.

I want to make sure that my actions are consistently matching up with my core beliefs. In my self-study, I conducted an intentional and systematic inquiry into my own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 5). I chose this methodology because within its design is the opportunity to better align my leadership intents with my leadership

actions. The interaction between my leadership intents and actual actions elevated the engagement and motivations levels of all school stakeholders.

Research Questions

- 1) How did my leadership foster teachers to form positive and supportive relationships with students?
- 2) Under my leadership, what were the challenges to fostering positive and supportive relationships?
- 3) How has my leadership changed, if at all, as understood by the five leadership practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2012)?

Conceptual Framework

The “Ten Commitments of Leadership” (Chart on p. 19), as deemed by Kouzes and Posner (2012) were derived as the behaviors that must be demonstrated to exemplify one of the five individual leadership practices. The five leadership practices as identified by Kouzes and Posner are Model the way, Inspire a shared vision, Challenge the process, Enable others to act and Encourage the heart. These are the five practices that leaders need to exploit in order to successfully lead organizations.

As a transformational school leader, the purpose of this self-study is to examine how I, may or may not nurture positive and supportive relationships within the school community to reculture a school in the City of Chicago. The conceptual lens used in order to study my leadership decision-making in a structured manner will be the leadership framework developed by Kouzes and Posner (2012). The foundation of this framework is the idea that leadership is a relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) and that the quality of these relationships between the leader and follower(s) (in this case the

entire school community and the principal) genuinely matter. Based on this type of inquiry into one's self, self-study can facilitate this type of transformation because it forces leaders to closely inspect and scrutinize their actions, thoughts and beliefs.

Additionally, this study into my leadership will highlight whether or not my leadership was effective to positively impact school culture and student achievement.

Table 1

Kouzes and Posner's Five Leadership Practices

Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership	Ten Commitments of Leadership
Model the Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clarify values by finding your voice and affirming shared values. ● Set the example by aligning actions with shared values.
Inspire a Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities. ● Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.
Challenge the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and looking outward for innovative ways to improve. ● Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience.
Enable Others to Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships. ● Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence.
Encourage the Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence. ● Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

Source: Kouzes Posner International Copyright 2009.

Limitations and Biases

I am personally and professionally invested in this work and study making the separation of myself as the researcher impossible. Therefore, what is lost in generalizable findings is gained in voice (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). This self-study should provoke many thoughts and recommendations for other school leaders enabling them to nurture and inspire a supportive school culture with positive relationships between teachers, students and community members. This study will provide a window into the effectiveness to which relationships may create positive results for the students and the school community at Renetta Elementary School. That said, the identification and acknowledgement for the limitations and biases need to be addressed.

My own biases must be acknowledged as the researcher, principal of Renetta Elementary School and subject of this self-study. Maintaining a reflective journal in the effort to “name” any biases will be used should any biases arise (Ortlipp, 2008). My evaluation is based on the shift in the school culture and the achievements of the school. As the leader of this building, I am the sole responsible person as deemed by Chicago Public Schools, for the success of all students at Renetta Elementary School. This impressed a greater pressure for improved academic outcomes at a very quick rate. Similar pressure might be imposed on the staff that will be involved in the study as well. My personal interest in this research may have unintended consequences on them and alter their intrinsic motivation for the implementation of curriculum and initiatives. Staff buy-in will be vitally important for the success with the Second Step curriculum. Creating opportunities for stakeholders to be heard and finding ways to avoid these initiatives from becoming a simple checklist will be equally significant. How and/or

what measures are going to be put into place to monitor and hold stakeholders accountable for these efforts? It must also be mentioned that the students, parents and community forums might create urgencies or uncover unknown concerns presenting further challenges that may have to be addressed depending on the context and severity.

Low levels of external validity can be present in a self-study. The incorporation of a new curriculum and school initiatives will result in data that will be very specific to the population and needs of Renetta Elementary School as well as the programmatic, behavioral and structural context of the school. Additionally, my personal reflections for the implementation of practice are respective to my personal experiences, meant to support my improved leadership. Since this is the case, LaBoskey (2004) suggests that a main tenet of self-study is that of “trustworthiness” of the researcher. My goal is to determine “truth” in my practice for other leaders by presenting evidence and findings that provide beneficial information for other practitioners to build their own work. The self-study is not meant to provide a roadmap for other practitioners. I hope to provide a launching point for other leaders who seek similar examinations of themselves through my reflective example. My aim is to produce a personal reflection on leadership from an honest and realistic perspective.

These initiatives in the effort to improve student achievement will not operate in isolation. During the initial stages of the school year we will be in a state of transition since we have hired a new Assistant Principal and Counselor. Also, worth mentioning is that as a new principal, I am still only in my third-year assuming this role with a staff who have had five new principals in the past decade. There are also many programmatic and instructional changes that are going to be taking place in conjunction with the

implementation of the Second Step curriculum and student and community forums. Focusing on those students, parents and community members directly involved in the forums and on the specific routines established and learning associated with the implementation of a new curriculum will provide some distinction between normal school achievement and the effectiveness of my leadership. Not to mention, as is present in the reflective journals acknowledging the overall tone and feel in and around Renetta Elementary School.

Key Terms

This self-study takes place at school within the context and environment of Renetta Elementary, as part of the Chicago Public School system. There are several terms that are specific to this system and important to the context to which I am reflecting.

5 Essentials: Five elements that have been shown to be essential for school improvement. Based on these five elements schools are given a rating indicating their ability to achieve improved results (University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, 2015).

Behavioral Health Team: Team of individual teachers and school partners put together to examine and details plans to best support the school's social and emotional needs. This team is empowered to coordinate restorative practices, address student minor misbehavior, provide behavior interventions, and work with teachers to provide a positive student climate with common expectation.

Calm Classroom: Luster Learning Institute (LLI) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2007 by husband and wife team Jai and Joy Luster. Calm Classroom is the largest provider of school-wide mindfulness programming in the United States.

Cougars Always Respect Everyone & Everything (C.A.R.E Team): The acronym for the school-based Behavioral Health Team supporting the school's culture and climate initiatives through PBIS framework.

NWEA MAP: The term used to identify the test published by the Northwest Evaluation Association. The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is the assessment given to all CPS students in grades three to eight every year. Growth is measured from spring to spring, although it can be administered up to three times a year.

PBIS: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports was established by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to define, develop, implement, and evaluate a multi-tiered approach to Technical Assistance that improves the capacity of states, districts and schools to establish, scale-up and sustain the PBIS framework.

Restorative Practices: Opportunities for pro-actively developing relationships and community, as well as repairing community when harm has been done. Restorative Practices include underlying mindsets, language, and processes to be used among staff and at all three tiers of support for students. When successfully integrated through the school culture and climate, Restorative Practices create safe and productive learning spaces where students develop social and emotional skills and strong relationships with

peers and adults (Blood & Thornsborne, 2005; International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2009 & 2014; Maly, 2014; Porter, 2007).

Restorative Practice Coach: The RP Coach will support and build the capacity for restorative practices at Renetta Elementary School based on the school's selected priority areas. The RP Coach will focus their time on developing restorative mindsets and language, build and enhance skills for restorative processes, create and implement disciplinary protocols and processes. Specific to MTSS, the school coach will support our Tier 1 - talking circles and restorative conversations.

Second Step Curriculum: This is a universal violence prevention program that is designed to promote social competence and reduce children's social and emotional problems.

Supportive Environment: This is one of the five essential factors measured by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (2015). It includes peer support for academic work, academic personalization, safety, and student-teacher trust.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter II contains an extensive review of literature on the following topics:

- I. The Study of Self
- II. The Conceptual Framework
- III. Conceptual Framework Extended: Leadership Profile Inventory
- IV. The Principal Historically
- V. The Role of the Principal
- VI. Leadership as Transformational

- VII. Transformational Leaders
- VIII. Transformational Trust [1]
[SEP]
- IX. The Principal Impact on Student Achievement
- X. Student Relationships with Teacher
- XI. Summary

Chapter III provides an overview of the methodology of this self-study. The context of the school will be detailed, procedures articulated, program considerations for social and emotional learning will be outlined, along with meeting protocols and agenda described for the student and community forums and teacher meetings around social and emotional learning. Additionally, explanations of the data collection process will be presented.

In Chapter IV, I will be utilizing the lens of Kouzes and Posner (2012) and the five-leadership practices to present a narrative of my leadership experiences through this process while in the effort to attempt to answer my initial research questions. Personal analysis and reflections will support the presentation of documents used throughout the implementation of the social and emotional initiatives while sharing anecdotal experiences derived from my reflective journal entries. Accompanying these reflections will be a critical friend interview focused through the themes of the five leadership practices laid out by Kouzes and Posner and supported by questions from The Culture Builder (Barth, 2000).

In Chapter V, I will discuss findings and implications. Within the context of educational leadership and leadership development I will explore how my findings fit within the current literature and how my personal experiences unfolded. Finally,

recommendations for how my experience can be applied for all school leaders and next steps for my personal practice and programs are explored to establish future priorities for Renetta Elementary School.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Study of Self

Self-study recognizes the influence of the local “context” or culture in which the researchers work and live, which is often “hidden from” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 81) them even as it impacts practice. Self-study research considers the culture of the environment of practice, how “the context shapes and constraints [their] practice,” and how through their own “actions [they] shape and change the context in which [they] act” (p. 81). Undertaking a self-study should support the exposure of local contexts that influence daily practice and identity development, along with creating social-cultural connections with embedded perspective to the context. Self-study allows for practitioners to scrutinize and to advance their own teaching (Pine, 2009). The study of self is also aimed at improvement with particular attention given to transforming teachers as a means to facilitate student transformation (LaBoskey, 2004). This supports the idea that we, as teachers (educational leaders), have a responsibility to assess our progress in the classroom (school community), uncover inconsistencies between our practices and beliefs, and to challenge our thinking (LaBoskey, 2004). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) provide guidelines for conducting rigorous self-study in the effort to argue that the goal of self-study is not to just acquire knowledge but to “provoke, challenge and illuminate” (p. 20) our practices as educators as well. They offer that self-study is a methodology

that is initiated by and focused on teachers as we relate to our instruction and to our students. There are the guidelines provided by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) to excite, confront and highlight our practices; Autobiographical self-studies should (a) ring true and enable connections, (b) promote insight and interpretation, (c) engage history forthrightly through the author's honesty, (d) center on the issues that make someone an educator, (e) be told in an authentic voice, (f) aim to improve learning for oneself and others, (g) focus on something genuine, (h) attend to persons in settings, and (i) offer fresh perspectives (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). These guidelines not only bring to the forefront our practices as educators, but support the establishment of our professional and personal purpose.

My self-study was conducted with the goal of better understanding my experiences as a principal and transformational leader to reculture an elementary school in the City of Chicago. Specifically, I intend to challenge myself through the lens of Kouzes and Posner, 2012 (The Leadership Profile Inventory) on this reflective journey to transform my leadership placing relationships at the forefront of my practice. Closely examining my leadership actions, beliefs and practices through this type of inquiry and methodology can facilitate school transformation. Another area of concentration through this self-study is to identify what effective leadership actions can positively impact school culture and ultimately student achievement.

The Conceptual Framework

Kouzes and Posner (2012) began to ask leaders back in the early 1980's in settings, both public to private, "What did you do when you were at your personal best as a leader" (p. 16) in their effort to better understand what made a leader exemplary? They

note that while the context in which leaders lead changes across time and settings, what makes their leadership successful does not (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). The outcome of their research was the Leadership Profile Inventory. The five leadership practices laid out by the Leadership Profile Inventory (Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart) all rely on a solid and trusting relationship between the leader and those they are leading. In the school setting, the principal must be focused on the relationships that they are forming with their staff and school community, both in an effort to “Model the Way” in addition to establishing the trust needed to “Inspire a Shared Vision” and “Challenge the Process” along with providing the support needed to “Enable Others to Act” and “Encourage the Heart.” Utilizing these practices, what I do as the principal and how I do it will have an effect on how teachers form positive and supportive relationships with their students and school stakeholders. Ultimately, positively influencing student achievement and the overall school experience enhancing and advancing the school culture.

Research on attachment theory suggests that from the time of birth in particular to the primary caregiver that the kinds of relationships that children form with others will affect their personalities and future interpersonal relationships (Ainsworth, Bowlby, & Fowler, 1991; Holmes & Farnfield, 2014; Rholes & Simpson, 2004; Riley, 2011). This would further support the necessity for robust student-teacher relationships. This self-study can be summarized on the basis of research indicating that relationships are core to a child’s development and matter not only in the home, but in school as well (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004; Li & Juliam, 2012; Riley, 2011; Roorda, Koomen, Split, & Oort, 2011; Wang & Eccles, 2013; Woolley & Bowen, 2007).

Correlating these theories in particular to this self-study would place relationships at the center of the teaching and learning process. As it is related to a classroom teacher, the school might be viewed as the principal's classroom, this theory would then suggest the same significance for school leaders to have positively robust relationships with staff. Much like the need for students and teachers to have relationships that are positive and supportive (Li & Julian, 2012; Osterman, 2000; Riley, 2011). Those students who have had their needs met by a caring adult will experience elevated levels of success. Equally significant in the success of a school are the relationships and interactions between a school leader and school stakeholders mirroring the relationships between students and teachers. This reflective journey examines how my role as the school leader influences robust, trustful and positive relationships and the impact to the overall school culture as a transformational leader. This can best be examined through a lens that focuses on the relational aspects of leadership and the work of Kouzes and Posner.

Conceptual Framework Extended: Leadership Profile Inventory

My ability as a leader to support the school staff behind the implementation of a social and emotional curriculum and how staff members foster strong supportive relationships between teachers and students is primary to this proposed self-study endeavor. All actions of the leader will be analyzed through the leadership framework developed by Kouzes and Posner (2012) and will follow the practices of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. Principals must stimulate, nurture, and support teachers (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995), be good role models, encourage cooperation, work collaboratively (Bosster, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Greenfield, 1982), emphasize facilitation, and support

empowerment (Lambert, 1995; Short & Greer, 1997). Attachment theory recognizes the importance of relationships, between students and teachers and between teachers and their supervisors (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004; Riley, 2011). The Leadership Profile Inventory also puts relationships between the leader and those he/she is leading at the center of all leadership work. As an educational leader, it is not enough to make the right decisions and put the right programs into place, but this needs to be done in a way that supports and empowers teachers, engages them meaningfully in the work, and results in lasting change. Leadership is a catalyst for reform efforts by involving all stakeholders in student achievement and offering all students opportunities for engagement and success (Hopkins, 2006). With this in mind, leaders have a moral obligation to ensure social justice for all students. Sustainable improvement efforts are necessary to move schools closer toward those standards of equity, justice and success for every student. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2003, 2005), sustainable leadership helps create learning, promises long-term success of the organization, distributes leadership, works toward social justice, develops resources, embraces diversity, and commits to actions that benefit the school and its students. My ambition as a leader is to help create an experience for every student that goes beyond the content and provides a place that maximizes the potential within every learner. With this in mind and the use of leadership framework by Kouzes and Posner (2012) it will be possible to take this reflective journey detailing my decisions and support to elicit this experience for all school stakeholders.

The Principal Historically

The historical context of a school principal should help provide a better understanding for this study. The movement toward a free and public elementary

education began in the early 1800's. The progression from a one-room schoolhouse in small communities that were mainly locally supervised grew into multiple grade levels. Eventually changing this model entirely as the nation grew during the first portion of the century. As students progressed through school, the need for specific grade placements emerged. This led to the emergence of the school principal. Originally, the primary purpose for principals was for maintaining paperwork such as attendance data. Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, and Usdan (1990) indicated that the Cincinnati, Ohio schools were the first to assign a principal-teacher to each school in response to an enrollment increase. Soon, cities like Boston and St. Louis assigned principals to their schools.

The evolution of this position in schools has taken on a wide range of roles and responsibilities from building manager to instructional leader (Balcerek, 1999). The 1960s and 1970s brought out a whole new set of expectations for principals as they became responsible for mandated state and federal programs. The federal entitlement programs included the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and then the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1975, which hugely impacted the role of a principal. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was a federal statute that included Title I funding for local educational agencies and schools for the purpose of educating low-income children. This Title I funding elevated the emphasis on student achievement for the most educationally and financially disadvantaged children in school system. Further down the road, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was a 1983 report to the nation by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Considered a landmark in American educational history, this report contributed to the

idea that American schools are failing. Kasper (2005) suggested that the report began a wave of state and federal educational reforms.

A decade later in 1970s and 1980s significantly shifted the role of the principal toward instructional leadership. In order to assure high quality instruction and academic student success the principal's role expanded more directly toward the supervision of teachers and students. During this period, the principal merged the role of building manager with instructional leadership (Balcerek, 1999). The principal was expected to work collaboratively with others in the school community to establish a school's mission and vision. Principals were expected to identify, develop and deliver professional development, promote, foster and facilitate shared collaborative decision-making, and shift the focus toward higher levels of student achievement (Geocariss, 2004). The notion of transformational leadership now became synonymous with school leadership. The standards for principal accountability on student achievement and school success continue to rise and increasingly become more intense, directly relating to sustained principal employment and the opportunities for meaningful relationships while creating impactful learning experiences.

The Role of the Principal

Today, many school districts are faced with the challenge of recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining quality candidates for the role of school principal (Gaussel, 2007). "Today a principal needs to be a teacher, a curriculum expert, an assessment expert, a bringer together, an authority, a public relations and communication expert, a financial analyst, and the guardian of legality and fairness" (p. 7). Research by Levine (2005) suggests that the lack of quality applicants for this leadership role is related to

inadequate training that is too disconnected from actual practice and empirical knowledge. “Leaders move people from selfish concerns to serving the common good. This requires vision and the ability to guide people toward it” (Pinchot, 1996, p. 25).

According to Hoy and Smith (2007), transformational leadership by a principal increased teacher efficacy. Purkey and Smith (1983) concluded that many variables were important, but the real change occurred at the school level under the guidance of principal leadership. Superintendents and school districts provided policy guidance, but principal leadership at the school level affected performance (Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988). The single most important factor in school effectiveness is the principal (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hoy & Smith, 2007). The principal provides instructional leadership and is critical to creating organizational conditions under which teachers work best and most efficient. A variety of responsibilities and activities are associated with the role of principal. Principals must stimulate, nurture, and support teachers (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995), be good role models, encourage cooperation, work collaboratively (Bosster et al., 1982; Greenfield, 1982), emphasize facilitation, and support empowerment (Lambert, 1995; Short & Greer, 1997).

Recently, there has been a greater emphasis on shared decision making and professional learning communities (Dufour, 1998; Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004). The organizational structure has shifted to a more accessible and democratic model. Essential for instituting change is realizing the role of collaboration and transformational principals are best equipped to address these issues (Marks & Nance, 2007). Hallinger and Heck (1998) revealed that principal leadership was tied to student academic achievement; principals had an indirect effect on school effectiveness and

student performance. More recently, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) concluded that many aspects of transformational leadership positively correlated with improved student achievement. Leithwood (2004) concluded “Leadership was second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. Leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most” (p. 3). These ideas resonate with the transformational approach to leadership advocated by Bass and Avolio (1997) and would have a direct effect on the progressions chosen by a school principal.

As expressed earlier in the literature, the timeline of the principal has been influenced by time and experience as the educational paradigm has evolved. Gareis and Tschannen-Moran (2004) state, “Good principals are at the center of good schools and that without good principal’s leadership, schools cannot succeed.” (p. 573). Attachment theory recognizes the importance of relationships, between students and teachers and between teachers and their supervisors (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004; Riley, 2011).

In a study for the correlation between transformational leadership and motivation, Eval and Roth (2011) determined that leadership style is a significant factor in the motivation of teachers. Teachers reported that principals who had the greatest influence were open, participatory, and effective (Blase & Blase, 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Blase & Kirby, 1992; Hoy & Smith, 2007). Improved student learning and more committed teachers were associated with school principals demonstrating transformational leadership. If these finding are justifiable, it will be important for the upcoming generation of school administrators to fully understand and embrace the characteristics of transformational leadership.

Supporting the transformation approach to motivate school communities would also be the ideals of adaptive leadership. In the ever-changing landscape of education, adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing individuals and groups of people to grapple with challenging situations and thrive. According to Hiefetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009), adaptive leadership is specifically about change that enables the capacity to thrive. New environments and new dreams demand new strategies and abilities, as well as the leadership to mobilize them. As in evolution, these new combinations and variations help organizations thrive under challenging circumstances rather than perish, regress, or contract. Leadership, then, must wrestle with normative questions of value, purpose, and process (p. 14).

Leadership as Transformational

The success or failure of a school and its students often centers on the effectiveness of leadership. Leadership is a catalyst for reform efforts by involving all stakeholders in student achievement and offering all students opportunities for engagement and success (Hopkins, 2006). With this in mind, leaders have a moral obligation to ensure social justice for all students. Sustainable improvement efforts are necessary to move schools closer toward those standards of equity, justice and success for every student. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2003, 2005), sustainable leadership helps create learning, promises long-term success of the organization, distributes leadership, works toward social justice, develops resources, embraces diversity, and commits to actions that benefit the school and its students. “School reform in the 21st century requires leaders to transform schools into autonomous, systems-thinking organizations, revolving around professional learning communities that can embrace

change and create a high performing learning environment for students and teachers” (Moore, 2009a, p. 20). Northouse (2001) defined transformational leadership as a process that changes and transforms individuals. Furthermore, the transformational leader possesses the ability to get others to improve, to change and to be led. This process involves assessing the motivations of others, satisfying their desires and valuing them (Frances & Cohen, 1999). Thus, a transformational leader has the ability to improve the organizational performance, highlight its values and sustain success. Bass and Avolio (1997) and Sidani (2007) mentioned that there are four factors to transformational leadership; they are idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration. The school principal has the opportunity to utilize these four factors as a frame for sustained school success and guidance. Thus, according to Hiefetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009), adaptive success in an organizational sense requires leadership that can orchestrate multiple stakeholder priorities to define thriving and then realize it. P.15

Transformational leadership has been studied since the early 1900’s and relates directly in many respects to the need for school reform sought by No Child Left Behind. Transformational leaders inspire a following of individuals that view work from a new perspective, commit to the vision and mission of the institution, and maximize stakeholder potential. Ashkanasy, Hartel and Daus (2002) found that transformational leaders use empathy, social skills, and self-awareness to create positive relationships, communicate vision, and maximize results. In the school setting, research has demonstrated positive correlations between meaningful and sustainable school reform with the behaviors outlined by this type of leadership. According to Bass (2008),

“Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and of the perceptions and expectations of the members” (p. 25). During the 1980’s as structural reorganization and reducing staff became the norm among corporations, the benefits of improved profit margins were met with costs related to a marginalized group of followers who felt increasingly dissatisfied and powerless (Conger, 1999). During this time, the tenets of transformational leadership shifted the focus for organizations emphasizing and centering on the development of employee morale, staff motivation and the idea of the greater good. Transformational leadership was born as a result of this shift. The leader as change agent was first described as transformational leadership by Downton (1973, as cited in Barnett, McCormick & Conner, 2001) to explain differences among ordinary, rebellious, reform, and revolutionary leaders. The concept later was expanded by James McGregor Burns (1978), whose seminal work on political leaders established the transforming leader as one who engages with followers in an effort to transcend self-interest for the sake of the team.

Transformational Leaders

The transformational leader focuses on higher order needs such as esteem, self-fulfillment and self-actualization as identified in Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs. Through this form of leadership there is an elevation of awareness and attention to specific outcomes. This awareness and attention fosters the development around new ways of thinking and behaving that lead to the achievement of those desired outcomes (Barnett et al., 2001; Gellis, 2001; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Transformational leaders move followers beyond their own needs through the sharing of values such as altruism,

supportiveness, service, honesty and fairness (Engelbrecht & Murray, 1995). Based on this early work, transformational leadership opposed transactional leadership. Burns (1978) differentiated transforming leaders from ordinary leaders who employ a transactional approach by commonly exchanging rewards for services rendered. More specifically, Burns identified transactional leaders as managers who recognize what employees' want and then get it for them if or when the employee's performance warrants the reward. Rather than promoting change within an organization, transactional leaders seek to maintain stability by encouraging consistent performance to meet agreed upon goals (Bryant, 2003; Lussier & Achua, 2004). This encouragement comes from the use of rewards and punishments that serve as economic exchange transactions (Barnett, 2003; Gellis, 2001). Although many leaders can be seen as both transformational and transactional in their approach, according to Bass (1985), "the leadership of great men (and great women) of history has usually been transformational, not transactional" (p. 26). According to Moore and Rudd (2006), transformational leaders motivate those around them to achieve greater outcomes than were originally intended or expected. Transformational leaders go beyond exchanging rewards for performance by developing, stimulating and inspiring followers to adapt and align self-interests with the mission and vision of the organization (Howell & Avolio, 1993).

In the Bass model of leadership, four dimensions comprise transformational leadership behavior (Bass & Avolio, 1997) including Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration. Leaders demonstrate Idealized Influence with displays of conviction, emphasis on trust, commitment, purpose and resolution even in the face of difficult challenges (Bass &

Avolio, 1997). When leaders operate out of deeply held personal values based on justice and integrity (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003), the developing relationship leads to strengthening of the followers' goals and beliefs (Modassir & Singh, 2008). Idealized influence is categorized in two distinct ways (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). When followers perceive the leader as powerful, confident, ethical and consistent in a focus on higher-order ideals, this is referred to as idealized influence (attributed). Idealized influence (behavior) is characterized as the charismatic actions that elicit alignment between leader-follower values, beliefs and sense of mission (Antonakis et al., 2003). Leaders provide Inspirational Motivation when they demonstrate enthusiasm, encouragement, and consistency in their communication of high standards and an appealing vision of the future (Bass & Avolio, 1997). As a companion to charisma (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), the inspirational leader excites and transforms employees to a mindset that greatness is attainable (Modassir & Singh, 2008). Whereas Idealized Influence refers to motivating individuals, Inspirational Leadership speaks to the motivation of an entire organization (Hay, 2007) by communicating high expectations and increasing team spirit and enthusiasm (Northouse, 2001). In addition to building trust and inspiring followers, transformational leaders also provide Intellectual Stimulation for the values and big ideas of others (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Through this stimulation norms of operation are continually reviewed and questioned so that new and creative methods for accomplishing the mission can be explored (Barbuto, 2005). As it relates to the trust established through idealized influence, followers are empowered to craft and propose new and even controversial ideas without fear of ridicule (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2003). Followers are moved out of the conceptual ruts through a

reformulation of the problem (Bass & Bass, 2008). The fourth dimension of transformational leadership is Individualized Consideration, which involves considering each person's individual needs, abilities and aspirations (Bass & Avolio, 1997; Bass & Bass, 2008). The transformational leader who uses Individualized Consideration listens, advises, teaches and coaches to further develop followers. People are treated differently and individually based upon their talents, knowledge and experience (Shin & Zhou, 2003). The individually considerate leader attends to differing needs for growth and achievement by personalizing interactions, encouraging two-way communication, delegating tasks to develop shared leadership and recognizing qualities in each person regardless of cultural differences (Bass & Bass, 2008).

Transformational leadership is the practice of leading an organization through a process of positive change or transformation. In education, this refers to school improvement and reculturing. Griffith (2004) looks at the direct effect of principal transformational leadership to school performance and states that staff descriptions of principal behaviors fall into three components of transformational leadership. These components are inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation as described earlier. Further, Griffith describes an indirect effect of principal leadership on certain student achievement. Additionally, he looks at the factors that are present in the principal-teacher interactions and how those relationships impact classroom instructional practices. The study gathered data from a survey of 4,165 teachers across the United States. Griffith determined that shared leadership, professional community and the presence of teachers' trust in the principal supported the instructional variables. So, although there is no direct link between principal behaviors and student behavior, there

appears to be a connection between principal-teacher interactions that has a positive impact on learning outcomes. Insinuating the value of trusting, positive relationships that impact student achievement.

Transformational Trust

As leadership continues to be examined in the literature it has revealed that trust has been more frequently cited in discussions of transformational leadership than any other leadership theory (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Research described in a number of articles has examined the relationship between transformational leadership and trust (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1997; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Jung & Avolio, 2000; Podsakoff, 1996, 1990) identifying trust as an outcome (or correlate) among other outcomes of transformational leadership (Avolio, 2004). Other research suggested a more complex role for trust within the transformational leadership paradigm. Some researchers have viewed trust as a moderator within the context of situational influences in the transformational leadership paradigm (Neeraj, 2009). Yet others have viewed trust as a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership and other outcomes (Jung & Avolio, 2000). If trust acts as a moderator of the relationships between transformational leadership and follower attitudes and behaviors, then the full potential of transformational leadership may not be realized if trust is absent. On the other hand, if trust acts as a mediator in these relationships, then it may not only be a direct outcome of transformational leadership, but it also may explain how or why transformational leadership relates to other outcomes as well. Clear implications for the effect of trust in leadership on follower behavior have been emphasized in publications in the popular management press (Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Covey, 1990, 2008; Galford & Drapeau,

2003a, 2003b) and in scholarly research articles (Mulder, 2009; Colquitt, 2007). Trust is not only important for sustaining individual and organizational effectiveness (McAllister, 1995), but it also lies at the heart of relationships and influences the behavior of each party toward the other (Robinson, 1996). The leader-follower relationship is no exception. When stakeholders trust a leader, they are willing to be exposed to the leader's actions, and are certain that their interests will not be abused (Mayer, 1995). If this trust is broken, it can have severe undesirable effects (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

Transformational leaders become role models for their followers demonstrating what it means to persevere and self-sacrifice to motivate the process of a shared vision (Jung & Avolio, 2000). Through observation of their leaders, followers develop trust in them because of their leaders' personal commitment to achieving the vision.

Furthermore, transformational leaders empower and encourage followers to think for themselves, which instills trust in the leader (Bass & Avolio, 1997). On the flip side, transformational leadership can involve moving followers from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Followers may experience higher levels of fear, anxiety, frustration, and uncertainty; all of which can be alleviated by the trust they have in their leaders (Kotter, 1996). Hiefetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) state that defining a shared purpose is often a challenging and painful exercise because some narrow interests will have to be sacrificed in the interest of the whole. But this is also a valuable corrective. When you face a tough decision, or when prospects for success look bleak, reminding one another what you are trying to do provides guidance, sustenance, and inspiration (P. 40).

Interpersonal trust can be described as an expectancy held by an individual that another individual can be relied upon (Rotter, 1967). There are two types of interpersonal trust -

cognition-based trust and affective-based trust (McAllister, 1995). Cognition-based trust comes from knowledge of an individual that provides evidence of trustworthiness. Affective-based trust comes from the emotional bonds between individuals. Followers of transformational leaders are likely to have both types of trust in their leaders because of the role modeling they have observed in their leaders and the interpersonal ties that develop between them. The benefits from trust in the leader-follower relationship are significant, and trusted leaders have a potential advantage over leaders who are not trusted by their followers (Covey, 1990). Galford and Drapeau (2003a, 2003b) discuss the importance of interpersonal trust as a reciprocal process between leaders and followers. Covey (2008) states that when this trust is absent, relationships and organizations pay a "trust tax" due to a lack of candor, hidden agendas, and dysfunctional organizational politics. On the other hand, when followers trust their leaders, they may exhibit more organizational citizenship behaviors that better equip the leader to accomplish the goals of the organization (McAllister, 1995; Colquitt, 2007). Followers' trust in the leader may boost their confidence in the character of the leader, thus encouraging them to reciprocate with care and concern for their leaders (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). When followers trust their leaders, they perform better and exhibit less counterproductive behavior that may come from their intentions to quit (Colquitt, 2007). Based on the literature, trust is identified as a key aspect and component of the transformational leadership paradigm.

The Principal Impact on Student Achievement

Recently, school and district leadership has been heavily scrutinized as researcher attempt to define impact of leadership on student achievement. According to Barth

(2002), there has been a rediscovery of the school principal. The effect of leadership on student achievement is confirmed by the work of other researchers as well in the field of education. Authors Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) make two important claims. First, “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 7). Second, “leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most” (p. 7).

Without a powerful leader, troubled schools are unlikely to be turned around. The authors stress, “many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst” (p. 7). The authors recognize that “rarely are—[these] practices sufficient for leaders aiming to significantly improve student learning in their schools. But without them, not much would happen” (p. 10).

Miller (2010) describes the critical need for courageous leaders in education today. In addition to loyalty, integrity, honesty, intelligence, and tolerance, he believes that today’s principals must have the courage to align their decisions to their school’s goals and mission. He states that principals must be able to ask tough questions and guide genuine acceptance of all students. “We have a moral and ethical imperative to educate every student. [If] we let them languish in mediocrity, shame on us” (Riddile, 2005). Miller (2010) believes that principals need to put students first even when it makes adults uncomfortable. He also indicates that school leaders must identify strong teachers and encourage teachers to respectfully challenge one another working toward common goals. As author Carl Glickman (2003) observed: “In successful schools, principals aren’t threatened by the wisdom of others; instead, they cherish it by distributing leadership” (p. 56).

Supovitz, Sirindes, and May (2010) examined student achievement data to study the effects of principal leadership on teacher's instructional practices and student learning. Their findings provided new contributions between leadership practice and student learning indicating an indirect influence on the instructional practices of teachers. Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) verified what parents and practitioners assumed, that there are effects that principals have on the learning climate, educational programs and workplace practices in schools. The researchers examined relations between school context variables like parent involvement, principal gender, teaching experience, instructional leadership, and school mission. The results suggested that principals do have an indirect effect on student achievement. Principals can influence school effectiveness by the actions they take to impact a school's learning climate. Hallinger and Heck (1998) supported this research with a review of research from 1980 through 1995 that looked at the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. The review yielded information that describes how principals' leadership influences student learning outcomes including school goals, organizational structure, and particularly, the principal's role in facilitating the school's direction with mission, vision, and goals. Hallinger and Heck stated that while the indirect effect on school effectiveness and student achievement is relatively small, it is statistically significant and is supportive of the notion among educators that principals contribute to school effectiveness, including student achievement. This indirect effect can make a compelling case for the importance of elementary principal leadership practices in connection to their focus on instruction.

Student Relationships with Teacher

There is substantial research on the importance of teacher-student relationships in the early elementary years (Pianta, 1992; Hamre & Pianta 2001). In a review of available studies on student-teacher relationships and academic achievement, Roorda (2011) found that when there was the presence of a positive student-teacher relationship, significant evidence to support an increase in student engagement and academic achievement was present. In the same manner, negative student-teacher relationships are associated with lower levels of student engagement and academic achievement. Considering students' need for belonging (Osterman, 2000) and Attachment Theory these finding are understandable.

Teachers play an important role in the trajectory of students throughout the formal schooling experience (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008). Aligned with attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1982; Bowlby, 1969), positive teacher-student relationships enable students to feel safe and secure in their learning environments and provide scaffolding for important social and academic skills (Baker et al., 2008; O'Connor, Dearing, & Collins, 2011; Silver, Measelle, Armstron, & Essex, 2005). When teachers form positive bonds with students, classrooms become supportive spaces lending the opportunity to engage students in academically and socially productive ways (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Positive teacher-student relationships are classified as having the presence of closeness, warmth, and positivity (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Students who have positive relationships with their teachers use them as a secure base from which they can explore the classroom and school setting both academically and socially, to take on academic challenges and work on social-emotional development (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). This includes, relationships

with peers, and developing self-esteem and self-concept (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). These foundational relationships where students learn about socially appropriate behaviors as well as academic expectations and how to achieve these expectations (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Students in low-income schools can especially benefit from positive relationships with teachers (Murray & Malmgren, 2005).

Li and Julian (2012) note that “there is little doubt that attention and participation differ greatly between a child who feels connected to a teacher and thus eager to take part in learning activities versus a child who passively complies” (p. 158). Students who feel respected and valued by teachers and schoolmates would in turn value school more and exhibit greater engagement (Wang & Eccles, 2013). Osterman (2000) reveals that positive outcomes are exposed leading to increased academic motivation, engagement, and ultimately achievement when there is a sense of belonging.

Summary

The purpose of this self-study is to examine how I, as a new school principal and transformational leader, am able to support the development of positive relationships that impact the school culture and elevate school success. Utilizing research and literature I have expressed the need for school principals to identify opportunities to be the catalyst for cultivating a positive learning community and elevating the school experience. This journey must begin with a keen understanding of leadership and fostering substantive and robust relationships. Pushing this notion, student-teacher relationships have a positive influence on student engagement and academic achievement (Osterman, 2000; Roorda et al., 2011). Osterman (2000) found evidence that student belongingness and the presence of supportive relationships lead to positive outcomes in student interest and the

enjoyment of school. In addition, it was also identified that participation and engagement ultimately supported student achievement with these supportive relationships when evident. Based on their findings they suggest that positive student-teacher relationships have an effect on student academic achievement through an effect on student engagement, providing a foundation for making student-teacher relationships a priority for school leaders. Further research by Leithwood (2004) concluded, “Leadership was second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.”

The role of the elementary principal has been evolving from building manager to instructional leader (Reeves, 2008). A building manager focuses on tasks like budget, personnel management and student discipline, while an instructional leader models, measures and evaluates the instruction in the school. Deshler and Tollefson (2006) believe that one critical job of the administrator is to promote improvements in student learning by paying relentless attention to the quality of instruction. This attention to the quality of instruction establishes the principal as the instructional leader. Mitchell and Castle (2005) believe that the most important strategy of instructional leadership is the promotion of professional dialogue. DuFour et al. (2004) supports the idea of professional dialogue in a professional learning community. The creation of a community of learners is enhanced by professional dialogue and our ability to develop relationships. Decman, Mackey, and Pitcher (2006) suggest that beyond knowledge as instructional leaders, principals should also possess other characteristics of strong leadership paying close attention to what is being termed a leader's emotional intelligence—his or her ability and willingness to be "tuned in" to employees as people.

Recent evidence suggests that emotional intelligence displayed, for example, through a leader's personal attention to an employee and through the utilization of the employee's capacities, increases the employee's enthusiasm and optimism, reduces frustration, transmits a sense of mission and indirectly increases performance. (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 24)

Instructional leadership, emotional leadership and aspects of adaptive leadership are supported with the research of Kouzes and Posner (2012). Leadership as Hiefetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) indicate is a difficult practice personally because it almost always requires you to make challenging adaptation yourself. Those are hard choices because they involve both protecting what is most important to you and bidding adieu to something you previously held dear: a relationship, a value, an idea, an image of yourself (P.45). The outcome of Kouzes and Posner's research was the five leadership practices laid out by the Leadership Profile Inventory (Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart) all relying on a solid and trusting relationship between the leader and those they are leading. Challenging these notions are the elevated expectations and responsibilities bestowed on building leaders by the Chicago Public School District, therefore tarnishing the trust in the system's hierarchy. Absent from these notions are the emotional demands and lack of support for the work on individual building leaders. As educational research continues to pour in around leadership, it cannot be mistaken the significance for a transformational approach to our work as school leaders supporting the school experience for all learners and school stakeholders.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this self-study is to examine how I, as a new school principal and transformational leader, am able to support the development of positive relationships that impact the school culture while elevating school success. This will be examined, specifically through reflections upon my own leadership priorities and initiatives. Recommendations aimed at leaders to support school culture for sustained success through relationship building will be exposed through this study.

The study will answer the research questions:

- 1) How did my leadership foster teachers to form positive and supportive relationships with students?
- 2) Under my leadership, what were the challenges to fostering positive and supportive relationships?
- 3) How has my leadership changed, if at all, as understood by the five leadership practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2012)?

Through the self-study methodology I will apply best practices and existing research to meet the challenges and unique needs of one elementary school in Chicago in a reflective manner leading to positive outcomes and a more supportive school environment. This reflective journey is examined through the lens of Kouzes and Posner

(2012), *The Five Leadership Practices: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart*. The utilization of this conceptual framework enhanced my leadership by continuously reflecting and analyzing my own leadership style and practice.

Research Design and Methodology

Self-study is the methodology utilized for this research. Self-study as a methodology has been increasingly used by researchers/practitioners with its foundation in teacher education (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Hamilton et al., 2008). According to Hamilton et al., a self-study is “a look at self in action” (p. 17). Reflection is an essential component that brings understanding to the complex nature of classrooms (Zeichener, 1996). Through reflective practice we are able to reinterpret and reframe our experiences from a different perspective (Russell, 1992). The complex nature of “classrooms” in my approach with this self-study will be my approach as I examine Renetta Elementary School in the Chicagoland area. My aspiration as the principal of Renetta Elementary School is to determine effective initiatives to positively support the school culture to sustain academic achievement and create an environment relevant for success. More importantly, learn and identify aspects about myself as a leader through this reflective journey, “Self-study is self-initiated, self-focused, and aimed at improvement” (LaBoskey, 2004).

As I look at myself in action (Hamilton et al., 2008), this study on the basis of its methodology will lead to better outcomes for Renetta Elementary School while providing the opportunity to apply existing research and best practices to the unique needs of the entire school community in a reflective manner. Untimely, this process will make me a

more aware, stronger and effective leader. “The aim of self- study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and set,” as put by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, p. 20). I want to make sure that my actions are consistently equivalent with my core beliefs and vision for the school. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) stated, I conducted an “intentional and systematic inquiry into my own practice” (p. 5). I chose this methodology because within its design is the opportunity to better align my leadership intentions with my leadership actions. Barth (2002) tells us that a culture diagnostic can be ascertained by careful observation of all the things obviously seen, but also often felt. Barth asks a series of questions in relation to school culture, I intend to utilize these questions to support my reflections on the bi-weekly parent, student and community meetings, forums and critical friend interviews. These questions should influence my ability to be more reflective on the school culture from the perspective of other key stakeholders and ensure that I remain consistent with my reflections.

The focus is to identify key initiatives and practices that will positively support a shift to the school culture at Renetta Elementary School. Ultimately, the enhanced school culture will elevate the school experience and produce positive student achievement outcomes. This research would then potentially support other leaders in the field as they set course on their leadership journey. In my leadership experience and with research, one of the greatest barriers to meaningful cultural school change is the division between what leaders say they value and what leaders actually do. Kouzes and Posner (2012) refer to their Second Law of Leadership: “You build a credible foundation of leadership foundation when you DWYSYWD—Do What You Say You Will Do” (p. 40). This was concluded to be the most significant way to establish credibility. Thus, leading to as

Kouzes and Posner state, modeling the way: “Setting the example by aligning actions with shared values” (p. 29). The purpose of this study is to understand and identify the most effective initiatives a transformational leader used in establishing strong relationships amongst a school community. Further detailing and scrutinizing my own leadership by demanding that I continuously reflect, critically assess my own habits and illuminate the “heart” of my work.

The C.A.R.E Team with the support of a Restorative Practice Coach will be leading the work of school-wide social and emotional development plans. Included in the facilitation of this plan will be the Second Step Curriculum and stakeholder forums as functions of this study and the development of social and emotional supports for the school environment. The Second Step Curriculum will be reintroduced as it was not utilized by the school for the past couple years. The parent, community and student forums will be completely new initiatives to elevate and empower stakeholders. The Second Step Curriculum will be part of the everyday curriculum and align with monthly incentives and lessons around the International Baccalaureate (IB) Learner Profiles. Our open forums will consist of a series of specific questions and open dialog to measure the engagement and investment of our school community. The goal of these monthly meetings will be to empower and invite elevated voices into the decision-making process. All of this work will be done within the normal school routine and professional expectations at Renetta Elementary School in the Chicagoland area. Personal analysis and reflections will support the presentation of documents used throughout the implementation of the social and emotional initiatives while sharing anecdotal experiences derived from my reflective journal entries and publically viewable student

data. Accompanying these reflections will be a critical friend interview focused through the themes of the five leadership practices laid out by Kouzes and Posner (2012) and supported by questions from The Culture Builder, Barth (2002).

Program Considerations for Social and Emotional Learning

The C.A.R.E Team will be the foundation for the social and emotional priority at Renetta Elementary School. However, there are multiple other factors that may positively or negatively address the social and emotional development of the overall school culture. The school will have completely new teacher teams, an adjusted master schedule, and a new assistant principal and new counselor. In alignment with Kouzes and Posner (2012) enabling others to act and encouraging the heart should be strengthened with the changes from last year. The infusion of a common focus, the Second Step curriculum provides a set of clarifying values and a common vision. This should also set the tone for our staff to challenge the process (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

I want to make sure that my actions are consistently matching up with my core beliefs. In my self-study, I conducted an intentional and systematic inquiry into my own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 5). I chose this methodology because within its design is the opportunity to better align my leadership intents with my leadership actions. The interaction between my leadership intents and actual actions elevated the engagement and motivations levels of all school stakeholders.

Setting

Renetta Elementary School is a general neighborhood elementary school in the Chicagoland area with about 500 students in kindergarten through eighth grade providing a unique learning experience with two different teaching philosophies. The student

demographics are 63% African American, 26% White, and 7% Hispanic. Students from Renetta School hail from a varied socioeconomic backgrounds and range from high poverty to affluent as indicated by the low-income forms completed by school families. The school's low-income percentage rests at 47%. The Chicago University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCRR) reported at the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year that Renetta School in the Chicagoland area with 97.5% of the students participating (14.5% higher than the district student participation rate) that only 34% of the students surveyed indicated that the students and teachers shared a mutual respect for one another. Reculturing a school involves the examination of beliefs, expectations, and assumptions for the purpose of school change that can facilitate a collective sense of purpose (DuFour & Burnette, 2002; Fullan, 2005). The culture at Renetta Elementary School is fractured and a focus must be placed on the social and emotional side of teaching and learning to reculture this institution.

Procedures

The need for some type of social and emotional support has been evident at Renetta School over the course of the 2016-2017 school year. Heading into my third year as the principal of Renetta School and represented by the data outlined, I knew something had to be done differently than in the past. Our quantitative data and school report card indicate a regression of scores and our qualitative data, the 5 Essentials data show us that our impact could be related to a lack of trust along with a score of "Neutral" under the category of a supportive environment. Thus, a social and emotional initiative has been launched with the creation of school-based behavioral health team (C.A.R.E Team) and implementation of the Second Step curriculum along with the use of stakeholder voice

opportunities instituted through forums for people to express themselves and be heard. The C.A.R.E Team has meets regularly and will receive guidance from a Restorative Practice Coach. Staff members will be utilizing the Second Step curriculum weekly during a structured and set time. These specific times will be supported with additional adults and specialized services to ensure program fidelity. Staff will be given professional development on the curriculum and the school will elicit the C.A.R.E Team to support staff. A yearlong calendar has been established to invite and provoke dialog with school community members to elevate this engagement and allow each of them to feel more empowered at the school, giving them a voice. This would be a completely new aspect to the school context. Agendas and focus topics will be decided on based on initial parent, student and community demand. During teacher team meetings, teachers will be asked to share this experience with the curriculum and discuss opportunities for next steps along with incorporating topics into the bi-weekly meetings. Social and emotional learning will be a portion of every grade level meeting.

As the program evolves over the course of the next three months of the 2017-2018 school year adjustments to plans, schedules and staffing may have to be addressed. These adjustments will be based on the needs or the school community. Throughout this process I will keep a reflective journal detailing my decision-making process and reactions, positive and negative to meetings, forums and program implementation.

Data Collection and Analysis

The foundation of the data that will be collected for this self-study will be based on a reflective journal and specific prompts. At the heart of self-study is the act of reflection (Hamilton et al., 2008). A reflective analysis of work products collected

throughout the curriculum implementation and meeting agenda items along with documents that will be created throughout the course of the parent, student and community meetings will be used as evidence of leadership decisions I made and reflected upon as such. Reflection can happen in a variety of manners including journaling, conversations, and analysis of documents (Hamilton et al., 2008). In addition to this reflective analysis, I will engage in critical friend interviews near the beginning of the second semester, at the end of the third quarter and at the end of the second semester. These semi- structured interviews will be conducted with a school administrator who works outside of Renetta Elementary School and has no affiliation to the school. The protocol for these interviews will be created prior to the first interview and used for the preceding two. The critical friend interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. The individual work products and documents that will be analyzed are described in the following paragraphs.

Professional Development Materials and Meeting Agenda Reflections

Our 2017-2018 school year began with a week of professional development. The week had a heavy focus on social and emotional learning for all staff. Agendas and presentations were reflected upon. Teacher team meetings focused on social and emotional learning and the implementation of the Second Step Curriculum was a focus of reflection. During the week of professional development Network support personnel and outside training took place. Staff was also involved in trainings presented by the assistant principal, the counselor and myself. As a regular part of professional development at Renetta Elementary School, teachers and staff submit an exit slip at the end of each session along with a survey on the week in its entirety these items were used as well to

reflect on progress and challenges.

Program Development

The development of the C.A.R.E Team to initiate school-wide expectations, norms and supports began the process of change for Renetta Elementary School. The implementation of the Second Step curriculum, coupled with the expertise of a Restorative Practices Coach also came with adjustments based on what had been learned in the process of the first half of the school year. Evidence for the adjustments was detailed in preparation for the second half of the school year around the same time as the final critical friend interview. The C.A.R.E team meetings and agendas were used as data sources along with surveys of stakeholders to support the decision-making process. Examining attendance progressions will also be used to further support the school's supportive environment socially and emotionally.

Journal Entries

I kept a reflective journal. As the school principal, I have been and will be involved in the development and implementation efforts of the C.A.R.E Team and the use of the Second Step curriculum along with the creator of the parents, student and community forum meetings. An ongoing record of these decisions and the considerations behind the decisions, along with other thoughts respective to the position were maintained in this reflective journal. These transcripts provided invaluable insight into my ability as leader to create, establish and maintain positive relationships with school stakeholders. In addition, some work products became functions of the everyday process of Renetta School.

Publically Available Student and School Data

Attendance: Student attendance data is provided to staff and parents weekly. As we positively build the social and emotional intelligence within the building and cultivate more substantive relationships with students our attendance and school achievement data should increase.

NWEA: I also examined and reflected upon student growth and achievement as measured by student performance on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. This assessment is given to students at the beginning of the year, at mid-year (winter) and end of year (spring) in both reading and math. All students in grades kindergarten to eighth will complete this assessment. The adaptive exam will provide a picture of how the student is performing in relation to their grade level peers. The results are normed nationally indicating a percentile ranking for each student. I intend to utilize the middle of the year data in comparison to the end of the year information to assess positive progressions. Again, creating a more conducive environment, one where the school attendance is elevated, should render positive student achievement results. Combined with the On-Track and student grades, this metric will give an indication of how supporting the social and emotional side of the school can impact students growing academically.

Critical Friend Interview

Self-study researchers have stressed the importance of an interactive and collaborative process through the use of critical friends in an effort to minimize bias, challenge thinking, and provide feedback (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Hamilton et al., 2008; LaBoskey, 2004; Schunk & Russell, 2005). I plan to host three critical friend interviews

as a part of this self-study. The first will take place prior to the beginning of the second semester of the 2017-2018 school year. The second will take place at the conclusion of the third quarter and the final interview will take place at the conclusion of the second semester. I choose this critical friend because this individual has experience in schools similar to Renetta Elementary School and a diverse public service background. This critical friend will be supporting this study as an individual without any connection or pre-conceived notions of the school.

Bias Prevention

There are several limitations and biases that need to be identified and acknowledged with this self-study since it is impossible to remove myself as the researcher being personally and professionally invested. Therefore, as Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) indicate, what is lost in generalizable findings will be gained in voice. My voice in this study through a reflective lens tied to the leadership framework established by Kouzes and Posner (2012) will provide a window into the extent to which relationships may create positive results for the students and school community at Renetta Elementary School. This self-study should also provide recommendations for how school leaders can inspire and nurture supportive relationships between teachers, students and community members.

Validity and Limitations

Self-studies may carry low levels of external validity. The incorporation of curriculum and resulting data will be very specific to the population and needs of Renetta Elementary School as well as the programmatic, behavioral and structural context of the school. Additionally, my personal reflections for the implementations of practice are

respective to my personal experiences, meant to support my improved leadership. Since this is the case, LaBoskey (2004) suggests that a main tenet of self-study is that of “trustworthiness” of the researcher. My goal is to determine “truth” in my practice for other leaders by presenting evidence and findings that provide beneficial information for other practitioners to build their own work. The self-study is not meant to provide a roadmap for other practitioners. I hope to provide a reflective example and launching point for others who seek similar examinations of self. My aim is to produce a personal reflection on leadership from an honest and realistic perspective.

These initiatives in an effort to improve student achievement will not operate in isolation. During the initial stages of the school year we will be in a state of transition since we have hired a new Assistant Principal and Counselor. Also, worth mentioning is that this is only the third year with a new principal as well. There are also many programmatic and instructional changes that have taken place in conjunction with the implementation of multiple social and emotional school supports. Although student academic achievement may be affected by many changes in the school, the effects of these specific initiatives and/or programs will be able to be examined by focusing on those students, parents and community members directly involved in the forums and on the specific learning associated with the implementation of new team, staff members and curriculum. Not to mention the overall feel within the building.

Summary

An essential element of principal leadership is the innate ability to build relationships and work with people. “To develop a community of difference, education leaders must take responsibility for developing a meaningful relationship with each

person they encounter- student, teacher, parent, board member of legislator” (Shields, 2004, p. 39). The purpose of this self-study is to examine how I, as a school principal and transformational leader, am able to support the development of positive relationships that impact school culture and sustain student achievement. As a result of this self-study I will have a greater understanding of myself and an overall improved ability to better support the relationships at the center of school culture. I also intend to provide recommendations for colleagues in leadership roles.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Study Overview

The purpose of this self-study is to examine how I, as a new school principal and transformational leader, am able to support the development of positive relationships that impact the school culture while elevating school success. This will be examined and assessed, specifically through reflections upon my own leadership priorities and initiatives. The investigation for the impact of this study will produce recommendations for leaders to positively support school culture for sustained success. The initiatives included in this study are the creation of a school-based Behavioral Health Team (C.A.R.E Team), the use of social and emotional curricula, the support of a Restorative Practices (RP) Coach and student/parent forums aimed to elevate respectful relationships within the building. Each of these initiatives have been established with the intention to target the specific needs of students and staff for the spring of the 2017-2018 school year while planning for the following school year.

My ability as a leader to support the school staff behind the implementation of a social and emotional curriculum and how staff members foster strong supportive relationships between teachers and students is primary to this proposed self-study endeavor. All actions of the leader will be analyzed through the leadership framework developed by Kouzes and Posner (2012) and will follow the practices of Model the Way,

Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. Principals must stimulate, nurture, and support teachers (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995), be good role models, encourage cooperation, work collaboratively (Bosster et al., 1982; Greenfield, 1982), emphasize facilitation, and support empowerment (Lambert, 1995; Short & Greer, 1997).

This self-study awakened my heart and mind to transformational leadership and allowed me to learn a remarkable amount about myself. I learned, as an educator, a school leader and most importantly, as a person about how process information to make decisions establishing what is genuinely valued. And, I have learned the value of voice. This study has forced me as an educator, a leader and a person to assess how I see myself in relation to my leadership. By critically probing work documents, reflective journals, and interview transcripts that contained evidence of my decision-making process, reflective responses to events, challenges, and accomplishments I was able to grow my leadership ability and vulnerability to support trustful relationships.

All of the analysis for this self-study was done through the lens of Kouzes and Posner's (2012) five leadership practices. The initial implementation of a social emotional curriculum and restorative approach to discipline program was initiated in the fall of 2016 and went through multiple iterations before the fall of 2018. Throughout the time of this study, I was able to analyze and reflect upon eight months of reflections, journal prompts and work products. These practices were identified and summarized through observations, interviews, and pursuit of the question, "what did you [the leader] do when you were at your personal best?" within organizations ranging from large to small, public to private (p. 16). The result of their efforts was named the Leadership

Profile Inventory, consisting of five leadership practices, each of which have two commitments. These are laid out in Table 1. As I seek to answer each of my research questions, I will use these five leadership practices as the lens through which I reflect upon my own leadership.

This reflective journey will answer the research questions below rendering recommendations for school leaders while promoting my personal ability to reflect on my daily practices as a professional; more importantly, as a person.

1. How did my leadership foster teachers to form positive and supportive relationships with students?
2. Under my leadership, what were the challenges to fostering positive and supportive relationships?
3. How has my leadership changed, if at all, as understood by the five leadership practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2012)?

Research Question One

How did my leadership foster teachers to form positive and supportive relationships with students?

Frequently, I identified my rethinking of expectations, pausing of initial thoughts and reevaluating the plans that had been originally established. Overall, the implementation of school-wide social emotional initiatives and my quest to elevate improved relationships amongst stakeholders required me to be much more reflective before responsive in my leadership. Put another way, I tried new approaches based on the setbacks, adjustments and reflections. A key aspect of the leadership practice, Challenge the Process by Kouzes and Posner (2012), would label this as experimenting

and taking risks, as well as seizing the initiative. They contend that the “overall quality of work improves when people have a chance to fail” (p. 131) and that strong leaders “met challenge with change” (p. 109). Rather than rigidly obeying my initial thoughts and plans for the institution of our initiatives, I became flexible and adjusted.

Self-critical was the majority of the evidence found within my reflective journal when mentioning teacher teams between March, 2018 and June, 2018, the theme of this depiction is that of adaptably and flexibility. Initially, more often than not my reaction to things that weren’t working well was that of aggravation and frustration. In the greater context, it became evident that I managed opportunities to navigate responses with staff as they elicited behavior that I found aggravating and/ or frustrating by modeling in a positive way. A journal entry from April, 2018 reads as follows:

I began our meeting this afternoon by modeling a Calm Classroom technique.

Once we completed the 2-3-minute exercise I asked each teacher to describe how he or she felt. One of the teachers, [Redacted]; an influential person replied, “I pass. This does absolutely nothing for the kids or myself.” While this made me sad, frustrated and aggravated, I am concerned about how she will approach this initiative and collectively influence others. I am equally concerned for the manner that she addresses our students, saying “the kids.” (written journal, April 13, 2018)

I later reflect that: [Redacted, the same teacher] has continued to make statements that make me doubt her ability to meaningfully implement the SEL initiatives without ownership of the initiative or students. The teacher has consistently referred to her role as a teacher being purely academic and she

doesn't know how to do this "other stuff." As she says, "We were never trained on this stuff in the past and those kids are just different these days." I have demonstrated and reminded [redacted teacher] to continue to understand the pulse of her classroom and implement these initiatives/ school non-negotiables for "our" students, I hope that this is sufficient. I also simply question this teacher's personal happiness and wonder if that would be the larger challenge, regardless for any initiative. There isn't enough time to fix every staff member. (written journal, April 20, 2018)

When a teacher consistently questions the purpose, and doesn't implement the initiatives with fidelity students will recognize the lack of sincerity and ownership to success behind the messaging. According to *Communique*' (November 2010),

Feeling good about oneself matters, but the best way to help children feel good about themselves is to provide them with opportunities to learn what their strengths are and to help them to cultivate the belief that they can rely on their strengths when facing a challenge.

When this teacher felt inadequately prepared, I provided peer support by way of the CARE team and Restorative Practices Coach to assist. However, how can someone who may lack joy for the work; someone who doesn't feel good herself bring confidence to students?

Similarly, when other teachers or teacher teams expressed concerns about where they would find the time to implement new material that was outside of their content areas when they were already struggling to meet academic minutes, or how they would frame conversations with higher need students? It was at this time that I needed to pump

the breaks and pause the process. Being reflective and listening, we needed to agree on procedures that the grade teams felt comfortable with. These conversations led to parents of higher needs students receiving communications with additional resources and supports to coincide with classroom and school initiatives. Frustration is clear through my journal entry with the length of time and slow moving the social and emotional initiatives are moving. Allowed this time ultimately gained support and buy-in with the teachers rather than just pushing through and not listening:

We just had report card pick up day. There hasn't been much progress with the overall thinking toward the SEL initiatives- meeting with teacher teams, progress seems stagnant. However, we did agree that a parent letter for our high needs students would be sent home for students in each of their grades who have been identified. Thinking from the perspective of the teachers I can understand how they might feel helpless walking in every morning to a roster of 26-33 and 4 to 6, maybe as high as ten of them are considered higher social and emotional need students. These conversations make me feel like the teachers are in a blame game against the parents, they just call it a lack of parental involvement. Nevertheless, gaining the support of the staff, their buy in to our initiatives is vital to our success. At this point, hearing them (teachers) and conceding in certain areas like a parent letter to slow down this process and empower the teachers with their input while exploring how to get more parents involved later in the year is a good table setting for next year. We, as an admin team (myself and/ or Assistant Principal) met with many of these same families yesterday during report card pick

up since the students report cards were pulled based on teacher recommendations.

(written journal, April 19, 2018)

The meetings we had with parents included discussion points and prompts provided by teachers to guide dialog with parents and students to demonstrate the collective ownership between the school and home. In the March, 2018 critical friend interview I share the following:

Making sure teachers feel supported is a real challenge. It is difficult for me to want to support or even try to fake it when teachers talk about scholars in such a negative light. I continue to be shocked with the division between special education students and general education students- “these kids,” “those kids,” “your kids;” it is so hard to alter this mind set for teachers. The hardest part for me is that I know the teachers realize the most challenging students are the ones who need us the most. I am struggling to determine the best supports for staff to meet our student’s needs. (critical friend interview, March 10, 2018)

Attempting to micromanage and exhausting my time focused on whether or not teachers were complying with directives wasn’t going to ensure meaningful relationship development between teachers and students and elevate the overall school experience in a positive direction. Spending my time with checklists also wasn’t going to indicate if teachers felt equipped to meet their students’ needs either. Instead of drawing a hard line with each directive, I focused on what would make it the most successful, listened to staff and did continue to force initiatives as originally planned.

The mindsets of teachers began to change. Early on in this reflective process I had a perception of teacher's deficit based thinking. I understood this to be teacher's having a fixed mindset and lacking collective and self-efficacy. A reflective journal entry:

I asked teachers for an update on their individual high need students and overall SEL initiatives during team meetings this week. It is a real challenge to have teachers talk and discuss anything more than the "obvious" challenges students exhibit. This time is spent simply as chance for teachers to complain about what isn't working. Teachers are very crafty at finding ways to blame the student, avoid any root causes and assume any type of responsibility. Mainly, I tend to get a nonresponse. Every time I ask them about root causes I tend to get either a nonresponse or they circle back to blaming the student. (written journal, April 13, 2018)

Similarly, I shared with my critical friend in an interview:

The conversations I have with teachers lead me to believe staff don't really know what is happening at home with the student(s). They have a difficult seeing beyond what is witness in their classroom. It is like I hear the same excuse-based narrative multiple times in different grade meetings. I have a hard time wanting to attend these meetings since they are so negative, it is exhausting. There wasn't necessarily anything changing from the professional developments or continued conversations. (critical friend interview, March 10, 2018)

I stayed the course behind the SEL initiative, slowed the pace and continued to prepare for the following year. I have been wondering if our teachers truly believed that through strengthened and deeper relationship building with our students they felt they

could affect student's academic achievement. These wonderings were based off of early teacher team meetings when discussions my teachers spoke in an unfairly negative manner about our students without demonstrating a true understanding for the behavior. I noted in my early journals, "They just seem unmotivated, maybe I could call this lazy, they didn't try or even seem to care about anything other than themselves when discussing some students" (written journal, March 6, 2018). It took digging and prompting with the use of research-based protocols to begin to hear positive accounts of students. These protocols elicited dialog that didn't exist in previous teacher meetings. Teachers begin to share through the use of these protocols what worked with a particular student in their classroom. There was a willingness to share and a felt sense of pride, teacher self-efficacy increased through the use of the Success Analysis and Consultancy Protocols (NSRF, 2014). At the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, I journaled more frequent instances where a teacher acknowledged personal challenges and sought support with colleagues to determine a how to achieve a better response from a student:

I was so encouraged this week! The [redacted] grade team was really problem solving together! There was a demonstrated proactive approach. Teachers shared strategies that worked to get [redacted student] working in their classrooms and decided to invite the [redacted] parent in for a meeting with the team to discuss how they could partner more effectively and keep one another informed. This feels like things are actually moving towards making a difference for a student, partnering with the family and building a solid foundation instead of being waiting for something to happen and reacting. (written journal, September 22, 2018)

This particular example showed a team of teachers actively suggesting small actions that they could take to improve relationships and outcomes, both academically and socially and emotionally for individual students. Their ideas involved differentiating academics, but more often involved a change to their interpersonal approaches. One of the teachers acknowledged needing to provide more supports around organization while another needed to ensure that a student understood the flow and structure of a new room. The teacher who admitted to having less structure and more freedom with behavioral expectations in their classroom needed to be more firm and routinized with a student to get them to produce work. The reflections also determined that this teacher needed to consistently connect with the classroom values established the first week of the school year. Each teacher on the team shared openly and accepted advice from the group. The context of conversations began to change and discussion went beyond the obvious behavior and academic abilities of students. Teacher identified with students, spoke about students' home lives, hardships, grieving losses and student's self-confidence or lack of- teacher's self-efficacy seemed to increase through these conversations. Incorporating the school counselor into these meetings was incredibly beneficial. Reflecting in meeting minutes are conversations where teachers shared the passing of a student's grandfather while another teacher discussed a student struggling with the loss of her mother as this student never received any services to help her cope. Our counselor being present at the meeting was instrumental for both the teacher's well-being and advice moving forward. We were able to provide wrap around support with school providers and outside organizational services.

During another grade meeting teachers learned that a student had been self-harming and struggled with self-esteem issues as she opened up to one of the teachers on the team. Other students in the grade level were experiencing and expressing high levels of anxiety for a variety of reasons from death to abuse or a new year (Paraphrased from meeting minutes September 24, 2018 and October 9, 2018). Although these conversations and insights from and about our students were not always actionable, it did represent a noticeable shift in the mindset of teachers as they compassionately spoke of students as individuals and not something to simply have to deal with in their class. This is an accomplishment I celebrated as I reflected on how our work changed between the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years:

The conversations and feel within the meetings is very different. I am not struggling wanting to attend or to convince teachers to care about our students because they are doing this through the conversation and actions to support. We are able to dive in differently and the dynamics of the teams are more collaborative, people are willing to share. Teachers are wanting to share and problem solve with one another. In the past, a teacher would complain about the kid in their room. In these venting sessions, teachers would have no idea about how that same kid behaved or what they did in the other rooms because they weren't having conversations with one another. This was a simple complaint about the student and an agreement from the other teachers if they knew the student. This year teachers are checking in with each other and using one another for support, "How is this kid doing in your room? What do you think is working for him, what needs to be different?" I didn't need to initiate the dialog. We've

been able to move on past the mindset and are looking more at the actual supports the students need academically, socially and emotionally. (critical friend interview, October 20, 2018)

Teacher collective and self-efficacy and a growth mindset approach were how these changes began to be achieved? Over the course of almost a year I was able to Enable Others to Act (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) by building a culture of trust. I exhibited my trust in the teachers and elicited their trust in me through our conversations and ability to listen. This reciprocal trust was built by “Doing What You Say You Will do” (p. 40), listening hear and not respond to teacher concerns and when appropriate meeting their needs while having additional supports in place for teachers, like the CARE Team, the RP coach and school counselor. When I was experiencing frustration and aggravation believing that teachers were not fulfilling the role to Model the Way as I had envisioned it, I did not condemn or irritate their practice. Instead, I listened, not immediately responding and posed questions that would allow for the teachers to see the gaps in their practice and existing student needs. Focused on a team structure, I encouraged collaboration and a joint effort of success to alleviate the feeling of isolation. As a function of grade level meetings and part of the problem-solving process teachers were asked to discuss their students. This process became incredibly valuable for departmentalized grades and students taught by more than one teacher on the team. Early discussions during meetings were personal and self-centered with each teacher focusing on the behavioral challenges of the individual student in question. When the evidence from this teacher lacked the same consistency presented by another teacher and how he/

she experienced that same student, the conversation simply moved on. This time was simply a share/report out without a conversation/discussion:

The Consultancy Protocol was first presented today by [Redacted teacher]. The teacher focused on challenges she is having with [redacted student]. I was challenged in determining how productive this time was, the other team members have known this student or worked with him, but only seemed to agree with the challenge indicated without offering any type of next steps or suggestions other than agreeing with the teacher that these were challenges. I question my facilitation with this process? In hindsight, maybe one of us needed to model the entire protocol? Our admin team is going to have to determine opportunities to force teachers to dig deeper without being a singular voice during the discussion. (written journal, May 8, 2018)

That said, after eight months of time and a new school year, teachers were actively sharing ways in which they could support one another to meet the needs of a particular student or group of students, without me leading them there:

[Redacted student] (one of the students discussed often last year) came up in today's team meeting. We may have been off topic slightly, but we spent additional time positively discussing this student. This was much different and more time than in previous years. It was very gratifying to listen to the team plan for this student. Teachers left the meeting having offered each other really solid and immediately instituted ideas. The meeting finished as if I didn't even need to be there, one teacher took the initiative and summed up the conversation,

clarifying the plan and agenda for next meeting! (Written journal, September 25, 2018)

There was finally a noticeable shift in school culture of Renetta Elementary school after three years, as the principal. While this shift has been the result of many focused improvement efforts, the implemented and focus on social and emotional supports has almost certainly been a strong contributing factor. Primarily this can be recognized in two ways. The first is in the manner in which discipline is handled. There is a restorative frame apparent in the school. Students are sent out of the classroom less frequently than in the past allowing them to spend more time learning in the classrooms. I reflected upon this after a new student was enrolled in the school:

We received a new student today with a mountain of paperwork and reputation from her previous school. She was considered a challenge and we were wished good luck. I could see the look on the teacher's faces when I informed them of her arrival. And, with that I had much greater confidence with our school team's ability to meet her needs. We have had several new students enroll at Renetta Elementary School and we are told they were problems or that they are out of control. Fast forward a year later when the student has acclimated or "normalized" and they are like a totally different young person! The student is self-regulating, better handling conflict, more confident and more respectful. We believe in the gift of every child (taken from the school mission statement) and we didn't give up on them. (written journal, October 2, 2018)

The achievement I reflect upon in my journal is revealed through the time teachers take to have conversations with restorative language to address misbehavior and,

build relationships that support classroom core values by asking questions to address the root cause of behavior, not just the behavior itself. Our school environment is held sacred for learners and time is provided differently for students as people:

Today, I sat in on a restorative conversation between a student and a teacher. The student was very expressive and honest that they didn't think the teacher liked them and was treating them different in a "bad way." I had to bite my tongue a couple times. However, it turned out that there was a multitude of other things swirling for this student. It was identified that the challenges actually had less to do with what the teacher was doing and more to do with what the student was outwardly projecting. The teacher sincerely expressed care for the student and their success. The teacher's response was empathetic and we made huge progress. I wonder if this same situation occurred a couple years ago if the outcome would have been different? (critical friend interview, October 20, 2018)

The social and emotions initiatives began in the 2016-2017 school year; these initiatives were seen as additional work and something that would quickly pass. The school focus and professional development for staff over the course of the 2017-2018 school seemed to leave staff flat lined on the effectiveness of the initiatives. There was a shift from isolated teacher classrooms and a strong focus on building our teacher's capacity to address the needs of all students in the classroom with the support of teams and additional services. The basis for this transition came from a variety of meetings, reflections and experiences. By the end of the 2017-2018 school year most teacher's conversations began to reflect a belief that they could affect their student's academic outcomes with improved relationships. This was a distinct difference from previous

“student and parent blaming.” By June 2018 reflective journal entries include observations that students had been appearing in the office less due to behavior misconducts and the tone within the building was encouraging.

We had our final team meeting today and the teachers established their agenda around celebrating their success with students showing off student work samples and requesting certificates for their scholars. The team also wanted to begin discussing what new things their grade level was planning for the following year- WHAT! (written journal, June 5, 2018)

I had hoped that the social and emotional initiatives would have had a resounding success and our relational trust would be on the rise. This was an opportunity to capitalize on the mindset shifts of teachers to continue to push our school-wide climate and culture. As I began to plan with teacher teams and provide professional development opportunities for teachers and other school staff on restorative practices, SEL curriculum, and talking circles I noticed those teachers who had seemingly internalized the importance for strengthening relationships the year before were vocal supporters and leaders in this work, a couple of them had joined the CARE team for the end of the 2017-2018 year and began planning with the team for the following year.

As the school culture shifted to focus on the use of restorative practices for all students, I asked teachers to continue to prioritize building relationships with individual students and examine their academic needs. Teachers were quickly able to identify the students they wanted to provide an academic intervention. We included a plan for our lowest 20% of our readers. During the selection period of September and October of 2018, I noted that teachers were identifying students that they – or another teacher on

their team - may have worked with the previous year. Teachers not only identified these students, they confidentially and compassionately shared in discusses about these students. Teachers were capitalizing on the relationships that they had built and everything that they had learned about these individual students. This was a success and the manner to which teachers were talking about our students had changed. There was less evidence of “student and parent blaming” and surface level observations. Teachers made thoughtful rationalizations for root causes including social and emotional challenges to support what might be holding a student back from academic achievement.

All things considered, the changes in school culture and the way in which my approach to addressing teacher-student relationships evolved represents the success that comes from Challenging the Process (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). While I noted earlier that experimentation and learning from experience was central to my ability to be reflective and responsive, this particular success was achieved by being proactive and looking for opportunities to capitalize on the lessons learned from the interactions with teachers via the social and emotional initiatives.

Research Question Two

Under my leadership, what were the challenges to fostering positive and supportive relationships?

I made assumptions and created a narrow perspective on the magnitude of addressing social and emotional concerns that faced our community, school, staff and students. When developing the initiatives to address the needs of our school, absent were the voices of two critical and obvious, pertinent parties. In this, I unintentionally neglected the opportunities to assess these conclusions with those stakeholders at the

heart of the issue. I made conclusions and based assumptions on information collected from personal experiences, my school observations, my anecdotal accounts, and student reporting - I left absent the voice of the student and that of the teacher/staff. I attributed poor and unsupportive relationships between students and their teachers to the observations and anecdotal accounts of the same students who were being consistently sent out of the classroom for minor behavior infractions were the same students who were in crisis. I assumed a one-sided perspective from the student's point of view who was being sent out of the room. Typically, these students reported that the teacher "just didn't like them" and that they were being "singled out and treated unfairly." I did not take into consideration or have the perspective of the teacher who would later identify feeling a lack of capacity to deal with these particular students and the behaviors they were displaying in the classroom. As it was stated by [Redacted] "We have never been trained to handle these kids" (written journal, April 13, 2018). During the critical friend interview towards the end of the self-study I discussed this:

It kinda all hit me at once when I finally figured out that people just wanted to be supported. Supported, but actually feel supported. And, understood that they had the capacity to properly initiate with our most challenging students. I was seeing and working with our most challenging and these were a small minority. So, I was having these conversations with the students, and painting with a broad brush to apply these conversations to the entire team of teachers. Once we instituted additional trainings, using the voice of teachers to determine professional developments and had a couple teachers leave [the school], things shifted. The ones that were really having the most issues with the students were becoming

more and more glaring. Of course, we will always have some teachers that don't have a great relationship with their kids, or don't make that a priority in their classroom, but these numbers are dwindling and even this small number getting on board a little bit more because now we are more focused and checking in with our supports more regularly. (critical friend interview, October 20, 2018)

Meeting with teachers and conversing about students didn't always create actionable outcomes. Since I did not provide, outside of the CARE team members, other staff members enough opportunities to lead the social emotional initiatives - behaviors were becoming overwhelming. I did not do a good enough job collectively building teacher capacity in a meaningful and purposeful manner. In our dialog of meetings, teachers could identify a need for a student, but did not move forward to act upon that need. It seemed as if we were caught on a mouse wheel of dialog about the student and what wasn't working, but didn't do much to actually address what we were learning about the student. I equated this to a lack of confidence to support the student with actionable interventions. I heard the term called "analysis paralysis" that could have summed up the stagnate outcome. As an example, if a teacher brought valuable insight about a student to a team meeting, we would discuss what that student may need and/or the challenges to meeting that student need. However, upon reflecting we often did not talk about what the individual teacher actually did to address the student's need. Furthermore, the overall effectiveness. Journals reflecting upon this feeling of plateauing reveal my questioning whether or not I had provided enough accountability to the initiatives and to individual teachers:

I appreciate the CARE team getting trained and communicating, but I wonder if this is infiltrating into other classrooms at large. I'm wishing I could go back to the beginning of the year and start this process over. I feel like students are continuing to slip through the crack and we have wasted valuable time. Not to mention, possibly losing staff buy in due to the stagnate nature of the initiatives and elevated student behaviors. I remember the statement, what gets monitored, gets done. Teachers might be learning more about their students, but I cannot be certain that anything has actually changed in their classrooms based on the initiatives. (written journal, March 6, 2018)

I question to what extent the teacher felt accountable to her colleagues on her teacher/grade team and more importantly, her students. While designing the structures for the social and emotional curriculums I carefully considered the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards that they may present themselves. That said, the impact of this based on our work with PBIS and our unique school programming conflict with extrinsic motivation considering the school philosophy in the primary grades. I made the assumption that adults apply for jobs and become teachers in this capacity because it is intrinsically rewarding to them. This naive assumption was extended to the staff; that a teacher, who clearly cares for children, would also be motivated to help their students succeed for the intrinsic satisfaction. There is also the built in external motivation that the success of students on academic assessments directly impacts a teacher's evaluation within Chicago Public Schools. Thus, improved relationships between teachers and students would support this. In hindsight, I do not believe that these assumptions are invalid, but I do believe that the team of teachers would have been more likely to leave the cycle of

“analysis paralysis” if the motivators were more clear or present supporting their personal values had I evolved my perspective and listened.

Tension was created with my relationship orientated approach to behavior management and discipline. This approach was in stark contrast to the administrations from my predecessors who had enforced several strict policies with one-size-fits-all consequence matrix. While I was making false assumptions that some teachers just didn’t put forth strong efforts into the development of their relationships with students, the same teachers were feeling lost with how to proceed under much different expectations. In addition to not feeling as they had the capacity to support.

While I had a vision for improving teacher-student relationships and thus increasing the overall experience for school stakeholders, I did not necessarily ensure that it was a common vision or purpose with all stakeholders. Kouzes and Posner (2012) name listening to others as a specific behavior tied to Inspire a Shared Vision. My goal was to provide students and staff with the opportunity to feel more supported within their classrooms and the entire school. Furthermore, to identify most high-risk students at the academic and social and emotional levels and ensure that there were supports in place so they felt cared for. Establishing relationships with individuals and groups of staff with who they trusted and these staff members who genuinely knew them. I failed to ask students what ways they didn’t feel supported and what was or wasn’t specifically working in the process. I did not ask students specifically what their teachers could do better to support their achievement, and I question if some of their teachers failed in the same areas. Their teachers may have asked those surface level questions, not taking the time or opportunity to dig deeper. I am sure it was asked, what was going on at home or

why an individual student wasn't focused or completing homework; the students needed to feel motivated. Although I had always considered shared decision-making and establishing staff buy in an essential part of my leadership, I am not convinced that I truly owned these characteristics in my everyday demonstrated leadership. I cannot say with confidence that I necessarily lead in a manner that left staff feeling more supported and cared for. I confronted this fact this notion during my critical friend interview:

I came to the realization that I had a tendency to assume the loudest voices were the majority, like the person at the store who yells the loudest or the teachers that continue to draw the most attention. I noticed that took these voices and made sometimes blanket assumptions in reference to the majority of staff based on the conversations and observations of these individuals. Not only did I say "If you are having this concern, then others must be as well." I stopped at the identification portion of the problem-solving process and didn't check with the rest of our stakeholders to see if they saw the same problem. I didn't always validate concerns. More importantly, determine if this challenge or concern conflicted with our values as educators. I took a short-sided viewpoint and fell into a psychological trap. I attribute this to a negative outlook and lack of desire to clarify and support- it was an easy way out, not to speak with other as I assumed they would just be complaining. (critical friend interview, October 20, 2018)

Since I did not specifically ask, more than surface level questions about the initiatives, it was difficult for me to know if my vision for the programs was shared by either the staff or students. We did rely heavily on our mission and vision statement; this

was created as a staff in 2016-2017. I communicated with our entire staff along with our CARE Team a rationale and importance for our priorities (connected to our mission and vision) and programming during our initial professional development based on sharing research and appealing to their caring natures as educators. Even taking time to utilize their own words as direct quotes about one another to support the need for a unified effort of social and emotional curriculums. However, as Kouzes and Posner (2012) state, “the key task for leaders is inspiring a shared vision, not selling their own idiosyncratic view of the world” (p. 81). The specific knowledge of what the staff and students could identify as obstructions to the achievement of positive relationships and a supportive environment did not necessarily inform my vision. Nor did the experiences of our veteran teachers and those staff members who worked with our highest need students each day. Had I taken the initiative to listen and ask questions differently, I confidently now realize that I could have designed a much more stabilizing structure that would have led to earlier and more sustainable success. I should have taken the time to listen instead of sell.

Teachers needed more guidance. This limitation can be directly linked to my narrowed perspective and assumed reality from those loudest voices and my lack of desire to fully investigate. I did not take the time to know what each teacher needed to be successful as a person intervening with a multitude of social and emotional challenges for handfuls of their students. Therefore, I unintentionally designed a one size fits all type of initiative. I believe teachers were ultimately left to figure out the specifics on their own without the necessary supports. This led to teachers remaining in their path of comfortableness. At the time, I identified this as lazy and unmotivated. I believed that it

was important not to dictate all of the details in our social and emotional curriculum and provide some professional autonomy. Instead I set expectations for check-ins and the utilizations of school norms, but did not require them to adhere to a script or protocol. I encouraged staff to utilize curricular tools, but did not require that it be recorded and monitored weekly. Instead, I assumed that professional development and grade level team meetings would generate the accountability for the initiatives. Professional development and grade level team meetings included suggestions for questions to ask or topics to talk about and left room for teachers to discuss, share, and develop their own protocols. All of this was done in an effort for to provide and instill ownership over their role as a relationship developer and to minimize the opportunities to push back against expectations they felt were overly tedious. Although done purposefully and thoughtfully, I think that the end result lead to inconsistency in how different teachers fulfilled their roles and how successful they each were. Notes from meetings indicate teachers demonstrating uncertainty and some discomfort months into the initiative:

I got the same “deer in the headlights” type of look today when I pressed the teachers during a meeting about the quality of conversations they are having with their students. As if they were in complete shock that I would even have asked if they were conversing with their students. Maybe they aren’t making the connection between the work we are doing on restorative practices and how they support or undermine this endeavor to their overall classroom and individual student relationships? I want teachers to own the work. Some are doing a great job really getting to know our students, while others stop at “she doesn’t do her homework.” (written journal, March 10, 2018)

In turn a couple months later I write:

[Redacted teacher] shared some really great insights about [redacted student] today. I was disappointing to realize that one of the other teachers on the team was surprised to learn that the student had lost her mother. I was under the impression that we were all in the know regarding this trauma and the lack of interventions for the student to grieve. I assumed this was something [redacted] might have learned about this student fairly quickly. [Redacted] is obviously asking questions that the others aren't. I need to check and confirm with RP coach for some additional resources. (written journal, May 8, 2018)

I failed to take into account the need to first develop teacher's competence and confidence. I assumed the embedded values as a teacher; compassionate and empathetic would prevail. In my process, I made the decision to not confine staff with excessive details and expectations, micromanaging, in order to Strengthen Others by providing choices, communicate my trust in the teacher's expertise, and give them a chance to take responsibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). As Kouzes and Posner so simply state "without the knowledge, skills, information, and resources to do a job expertly... people feel overwhelmed and disabled" (p. 167). I believe that this is what I inadvertently did. Instead of accomplishing my goal of empowering the staff to make these initiatives their own and comfortably applying these newly learned skills. I actually limited their self-confidence and their ability to be effective as managers of the social emotional curriculum and school initiatives.

Research Question Three

How has my leadership changed, if at all, as understood by the five leadership practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2012)?

This research question has been the most intriguing and eye-opening to investigate. This question has required me to take a critical and sometimes evaluative look at my leadership, more importantly, myself personally. Taking a deeper dive into my leadership and holding a magnifying glass to my personal and professional practice has been uncomfortable. However, this has allowed me to learn much about myself in all facets. Equally difficult was separating how my leadership has changed as a direct result of these social and emotional school curriculums and programmatic implementations. Also, taking into consideration how much was a result of my collective and reflective growth as a second and third year principal. The position of principal in the City of Chicago is most emotionally taxing, exhausting and absolutely overwhelming position due to the enormity and magnitude of that seat. I know that I have become a more attuned leader and person because of this self-study.

Grounded in my values and stabilized by the Five Leadership Practices. Throughout the course of the eight months of this study, I had to address several challenging conversations and situations. My nature has always been non-confrontational. Through this study I found myself becoming more and more confident in my leadership decisions and how I carried those decisions out. I didn't always shy from hosting critical conversations with individual teachers and teacher teams when they were falling short of expectations, or making tough adjustments to put the needs of students and/ or teachers first depending on the situation. The entire purpose of

implementing the social and emotional curriculums was to prioritize the relationship between the teacher and the student in order to improve their academic engagement and overall school experience. This means putting the needs of the student before that of the teacher or myself while listening the entire time to understand first. This focus and commitment helped me to have the courage to lead difficult conversations and remain focused on the situations where staff may not be acting in the best interests of the students or veering from our vision. In highlighting the importance for leaders to Model the Way, Kouzes and Posner (2012), suggest that a leader must “choose the principles you will use to guide your decisions and actions” (p. 42). For me, the implementation of the social and emotional curriculums was at the heart of this self-study and based on the principle and belief that every stakeholder benefits from the feeling of having a community who genuinely cares for them. If this is my stated value, then all of my actions and decisions must follow this value. While reflecting with my critical friend, I spoke about modeling for staff:

Sitting in my office or in a meeting having a theoretical conversation with the teachers is one thing. It is another thing to go into the classrooms and observe it unfolding. Enhancing this is taking part or leading the social emotional initiatives. Personally, getting to know the kids better myself became a huge factor for dialog and trust during individual conversations or with teacher team meeting because I was in the classrooms. This not only better supported the teachers with my physical presence, something they requested, but further opened the door to get to know the teacher as well establishing a deeper connection with

all parties involved. This was a form of support the teachers greatly appreciated and I believe the students even more. (critical friend interview, July 17, 2018)

My focus on this initiative has helped me to find my voice and set the example (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). The CARE Team can see how my actions align to my values and our school vision. I continued and enhanced the initiatives with professional development for our team and then the entire staff including paraprofessionals which supported the research behind why relationships are so important in schools and getting everyone involved. Through the use of stories, research and videos I communicated how I was committed and valued the ideas within our mission and vision. Reflecting back, as much as I like to think I was completely consistent, it took some time for my “walk” and “talk” to fully align. Now, when I say that relationships are important, I can follow it with action when I put these relationships first, prioritize my time and energy towards building and maintaining these relationships in my school, and confront situations that do not uphold this value and vision.

I established energy with persistent efforts. This refined act of self-study has forced me to clearly deliver focus to my school improvement efforts. There are many areas in need of improvement at Renetta Elementary, both instructionally and socially. However, I have begun to see the value in generating small wins and encouraging risk taking within my school and staff. I have always had the tendency to be overly critical of myself and point out what I am not doing well. Unfortunately, this is also something that trickles into my leadership. In seeing how this could stall the work of the CARE Team I had to become more purposeful in finding small wins to celebrate and validate the at times thankless work:

The end of the year is quickly approaching and testing is just about here; I need to pause and assess our progress. We have underutilized our coach and I'm feeling the team (CARE) is at a stagnate place- I have to find some positive points for them and celebrate what has been accomplished. I know that if I am feeling stressed and exhausted based on the year then the team and staff is feeling the same. We all need a morale boost. I know that we are doing good work, work that will be effective. We are better supporting students and teachers. Despite not seeing huge gains and having our daily challenges, we are making a difference in the lives of our scholars. Test time is pressure packed, is the staff feeling overwhelmed? Thinking about [redacted teacher] I haven't seen [redacted student] or [redacted student] in the office in weeks! I wonder if the teachers have felt this in their classrooms or what has been the difference? (written journal, May 11, 2018)

Kouzes and Posner (2012) name this as an important part of Challenging the Process, specifically to experiment and take risks. When faced with a challenging student or staff member who seems to lack all motivation and is perhaps disruptive and disrespectful, is it understandable that I would observe a lack of self-efficacy or even motivation to address the needs. My challenge as a leader had then become determining how to build momentum with small, attainable victories. This has been important not only in my own reflective practice, but in how I lead all school teams and individuals. I have to personally step back and find ways in align actions with our mission and vision to which we moved forward as a school and/or with an initiative such as social and emotional curriculums. Within the last eight months this meant that I would start to

acknowledge and celebrate the fact that teachers were working less in isolation. I needed to recognize the sharing of knowledge, tips, and strategies with one another. Instead of getting frustrated and aggravated at the lack of consistency in how each individual staff members were implementing social and emotional strategies, I needed to look at how teams and individuals were interacting with their students and colleagues through the strategies. I had to look for the small ways in which this was improving over time when teachers would bring new “lightbulb” moments and breakthroughs they had with colleagues, individual students and small groups. While I had to be purposeful about not getting stuck in my own disappointments, I also had to ensure that I provided opportunities for the teacher teams to see all the steps they were making towards their own goals and progress with students. This included giving them “small doable actions” (p. 129) that they could easily accomplish. These accomplishments would also lead to some noticeable outcomes with their class community or individual students. These small victories have huge impact as significant validations for the adults on their very personal work and accomplishments. As an educator, I know how effective small, specific, and positive praise can be to students. The most difficult students need to hear something positive, even if it is as minor as the way they walked into a room or that they arrived with a pencil. Consistent celebration of these small wins increases their likelihood of continuing on that path and builds momentum for larger positive changes. Better supporting and recognizing these efforts through these validations by the adults fed into the students strengthened relationships and trust building. This notion only makes sense that the same would apply to staff members. I began to find ways to celebrate when those values were being displayed and this strengthened my ability to use my

values to confront situations that were not aligned with those values. Again, solidifying trust and creating credibility by following through on actions that I said I would. In this way, I was able to Encourage the Heart and recognize the contributions of staff and celebrate victories (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). This has been particularly powerful as this study was taking place during a time period where resources in the Chicago Public Schools were being dramatically cut. This was also at a time when tensions between the teacher union and the district were palpable as teachers were expressing feeling devalued, tarnishing trustful relationship opportunities.

Summary

The role of principal, especially in the City of Chicago emanates with the heavy burden of countless decisions being made on a second by second basis in arguably one of the most stressful and overwhelmingly impactful professions. Clear implications for the effect of trust in leadership on follower behavior have been emphasized in publications in the popular management press (Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Covey, 1990; Covey, 2008; Galford & Drapeau, 2003a, 2003b) and in scholarly research articles (Mulder, 2009; Colquitt, 2007). Trust is not only important for sustaining individual and organizational effectiveness (McAllister, 1995), but it also lies at the heart of relationships and influences the behavior of each party toward the other (Robinson, 1996). The leader-follower relationship is no exception. When stakeholders trust a leader, they are willing to be exposed to the leader's actions, and are certain that their interests will not be abused (Mayer, 1995). If this trust is broken, it can have severe undesirable effects (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Transformational leaders become role models for their followers demonstrating what it means to persevere and self-sacrifice to motivate the process of a

shared vision (Jung & Avolio, 2000). Through observation of their leaders, followers develop trust in them because of their leaders' personal commitment to achieving the vision. Furthermore, transformational leaders empower and encourage followers to think for themselves, which instills trust in the leader (Bass & Avolio, 1995).

How I collected and reflected on my personal decision making ability to enhance the experience of an entire school community has affirmed who I am and what I value as an educator, leader and most importantly, a person. I was challenged in my own perceptions of leadership and my ability as a leader to support the school staff and community, building this trust. Primary to this self-study was the implementation of social and emotional curricula and how staff members fostered strong and supportive relationships within the school community. This experience allowed me to feel how I failed to first develop teacher's competence and confidence empowering them to be equipped with the appropriate interventions to confront and address the challenges of each unique day. I was able to reflectively resolve and determine invaluable lessons as I progress on my journey of transformational leadership.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Study Insight

This reflective journey examines how my role as the school leader influences trustful and positive relationships and the impact to the overall school culture as a transformational leader. The culture of a school consists of the assumptions, habits, expectations, and beliefs of the school's staff and exists as clearly as the school building itself (DuFour & Burnette, 2002). As the school leader, my first responsibility was to identify the core cultural elements, both positive and negative, then attempt to shift them so that student learning is improved and school success is sustained. I believe this begins with establishing and fostering positive relationships. According to Moore and Rudd (2006), transformational leaders motivate those around them to achieve greater outcomes than were originally intended or expected. Transformational leaders go beyond exchanging rewards for performance by developing, stimulating and inspiring followers to adapt and align self-interests with the mission and vision of the organization (Howell & Avolio, 1993). This reflective journey examined my path to prioritize and introduce initiatives to improve the school culture of Renetta Elementary for sustained school and student success. My lens of focus for this reflective journey was on the relational aspects of leadership and the work of Kouzes and Posner (2012).

Discussion of the Results

I have learned from this study that as an educational leader, it is essential to cultural of a school that teachers feel supported and validated while meaningfully engaging them in the work. It is not enough to simply put the right programs in place and make well-intended decisions. A school staff must be provided the guidance to competently and confidently initiate and support opportunities that can then result in lasting change.

The catalyst for reform efforts is leadership by involving all stakeholders in student achievement and offering all students opportunities for engagement and success (Hopkins, 2006). With this in mind, there is a moral obligation on the part of educators to ensure social justice for all students. Sustainable improvement efforts are necessary to move schools closer toward those standards of equity, justice and success for every student. This might be an ideal for transformational leaders. However, staff supports and empowerment initiate this process. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2003, 2005), sustainable leadership helps create learning, promises long-term success of the organization, distributes leadership, works toward social justice, develops resources, embraces diversity, and commits to actions that benefit the school and its students. My ambition as a leader is to help create an experience for every student and staff member that goes beyond the content and provides a place that maximizes the potential within every learner. With this in mind and the use of leadership framework by Kouzes and Posner (2012) it has been possible to take this reflective journey detailing my decisions and support to elicit this experience for all school stakeholders and provide

recommendations based on my experiences to current and future transformational leaders.

This self-study was unique in its focus the leadership of a school principal in the City of Chicago and on specific initiatives tied to this school. Rooted in teacher preparation, self-study arose as a tool for pre-service teachers to use reflective inquiry (Hamilton et al., 2008; LaBoskey, 2004; Lyons, Halton, & Freidus, 2013). This practice is much less common to find in-service educators or leaders engaging in this formal self-study practice. As professionals in the field of education, we expect and encourage in-service teachers and/or leaders to engage in reflective practices. However, this is much less commonly done in a formal process. Reflective inquiry can be a powerful tool in self and professional development for educational professionals.

In this self-study, specifically through the implementation of social and emotional initiatives I have attempted to explore how my own leadership decisions and have fostered the development of relationships between teachers and students in my school. The social and emotional initiatives at the school began in the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years with uneven results. A heavier focus on SEL initiatives resulted in the 2017-2018 school year yielding successes and lessons learned for the promotion of the 2018-2019 school year. A critical and reflective look back upon the process showed success in changing the overall culture of the school. This success put more emphasis on the use of restorative practices to address behavior and the development of more positive relationships within the school community. The study also showed increased teacher capacity and collaboration around addressing the individual needs of the students. At the same time, however, it did not lead to fully developed supports as it was originally

planned through the use of social and emotional programs. The individual perspective of this school leader actively engaging in the work of school improvement can lead to valuable insights. While the findings presented may be unique to the individuals involved and this specific school setting, it can still offer insight to those school leaders addressing similar desires within their schools. Providing a unique perspective not easily found in the current body of research is the voice represented through this study.

Reinforce Through Systems and Processes (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 93)

The social and emotional initiatives and school systems heading into the 2018-2019 school year looked very different from my first year as the principal, 2015-2016. Perhaps this could be a case of the less relevant specifics of the initiatives muddying the water for the intended outcomes. When more emphasis was placed on changes being made to class times or locations of space then was on the individual needs of students being met and a reactive approach to all behaviors- we lost sight of our initial intentions. Staff had a tendency to focus more on the adults and less on the students. Some of these concerns were valid and the adjustments were vital for the school, especially with the budgetary constraints and cuts. However, an ever-growing body of research has shown that the implementations of social and emotional curriculums are the “missing piece” to school improvement in the United States (Elias et al., 1997). Nevertheless, I believe that a curriculum for the sake of a curriculum is not necessary if you can achieve the same conditions that a formal initiative provides within the teacher’s normal professional practices. I do not mean to suggest that a teacher, as exceptional as he/she may be in their everyday practice, can reach all students and meet all their needs. In our day and age of learning and social development, teaching presents the most challenging

profession. This is without the notion of our society influencing, positively or negatively to personalities walking into our schools daily. With that, I believe that there is a great need in schools for a mechanism that identifies those students most at risk and provides them with supports and/or an adult(s) who are committed to their success. I believe that the right next step for Renetta Elementary in this aspect is to create a system where this happens in partnership with classroom teachers, maintaining a school focus on social and emotional needs while also providing supports outside of the classroom by other adult(s) in the building and community.

Instead of forcing curriculum at all of the adults without empowering and supporting them in the work, it can be more purposeful to elicit interested individuals to establish supports and utilize the capabilities and motivations of staff within the school community. The best opportunity for this matching at Renetta Elementary would be with the CARE Team partnering with individual students in need or the creation of a teaming process of support for teachers. This is similar to programs described by Blum and Jones (1993) and Slicker and Palmer (1993) where a school staff member is paired with an at-risk student, meets regularly with the student, and serving as a role model and advocate. A simple weekly check in with a staff member, similar to Check In – Check Out (Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008) may serve as a more effective and sustained intervention to establish higher quality relationships with students while infusing purposeful mentoring into the equation. Moving in this direction might also support staff members feeling overwhelmed with additional items added to their already full plates of professional practice. Also, worth noting is that a vital component to reduce the feeling of overwhelmed staff could be determined with additional support and proper

compensations for their time. Providing opportunities for staff to interact outside of the academic realm with clubs and activities would further solidifying relationships between adults, students and the entire school community.

The initial design of the social and emotional programs at Renetta Elementary ultimately became inauthentic, lacked accountable measures and focused on compliance rather than meaningful improvement of relationships and meeting the needs of students. Early reflective journals revealed that I noticed some teachers merely did not buy into their role as a practitioner of student's social and emotional needs. Without this buy in some staff were perceived as simply going through the motions while behaving in a destructive and adversarial manner. Ultimately, this became the demise of opportunities to promote and successfully implement SEL curriculum with school-wide fidelity. Successful individuals were scattered throughout the building, but it was done with individuals willingly volunteering to serve in that capacity and in isolation. The reality is that in some cases, not all teachers in a specific building symbolize values that exemplify care and a commitment to the best outcomes for individual students. At least this is not understood by some of the students who may the highest of needs. Education is one professional field that doesn't allow as much flexibility and autonomy with staffing for building leaders. With this in mind, I cannot force a staff member to fill this role if they either do not want to, or don't have the skills to support the overall program. Interestingly enough, in the Chicago District, with limited budgets it is difficult to compensate teachers as professionals for providing additional supports outside of their normal duties. Although the structural frame of Bolman and Deal's (2010) leadership framework acknowledges that structures allow people to know their roles and exactly

what is expected of them, they also note that not having the right structure in place can do more harm than good. Also, it would be worth further investigating what the individual CARE Team members themselves gained from the relationships between them, their teaming structure and individual students. Considering the context of a variety of major influences on children's development, Myers and Pianta (2008) recognize that "teachers seem to have an influence over and above that of parents and peers, and this influence is particularly linked to school outcomes" (Jeffrey, Auger, & Pepperell, 2013, p. 1).

Current researchers recognize multiple similarities between parents and teachers, especially in today's culture when parents have increasingly, due to a multitude of reasons become absent in the lives of school age children. Twenty-first century teachers should be considered ad hoc attachment figures at the very least (Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). Noddings (2007), a renowned scholar of teacher caring, pointed out that "we learn from those we love," and asserts that "teachers must demonstrate caring in order to teach them well" (Phillippo, 2002, p. 445). Supporting this notion and attachment theory perspectives whereby children tend to feel safer and more secure when in the presence of a parent. Hughes, Luo, Oi-man, and Lloyd (2008) add, "a close and supportive relationship with one's teacher should also be considered foundational to providing emotional security and confidence in children" (p. 6). Bolman and Deal (2010), who examine leadership through four frames (political, human resource, structural, and symbolic), address types of motivations through the human resource frame. Within this frame they argue that leaders must find ways to incorporate the beliefs, spirituality, and intrinsic motivations of their staff and that in doing so they will empower their staff and create commitment. This same frame is upheld by Kouzes and

Posner (2012) linking intrinsic and external motivations throughout their Five Leadership Practices. Cooper and Miness (2014) explored teacher and student relationships in depth and noted that teachers must have an academic understanding and personal understanding of students. Results of their study found that the perceptions of students feeling cared for by teachers made them feel as if they were understood as individuals. Each of these perspectives and researched leadership frames support the importance of high quality supportive relationships within schools.

At Renetta Elementary School, the process to put in place fostering teacher collaboration was most substantial through researched opportunities. I was able to get teachers focused on a specific problem of practice and created some group accountability as they listened to one another, asked questions, and provided suggestions and feedback with the use the Success Analysis and Consultancy protocols (NSRF, 2014) during team meetings. I was also very consistent with the use of social and emotional strategies to begin each meeting. This supported a purposeful push for teachers to use an asset based approach while discussing students and continually focus on what was within their locus of control. This asset based approach, optimistic and growth orientated mindset required teachers to look for students' strengths and areas of success. Early on, team meetings and conversations initially were focused negatively and did not provide meaningful collaboration. By the end of the self-study, I was reflecting more and more upon how staff identified meaningful information, spoke more positively about students and shared next steps with one another- stepping outside the isolation of their own classroom. I maintained my energy and focus as the leader of Renetta Elementary School with these

new persistent efforts. I utilized current research based studies to support my actions and vocalized perspectives aligned to our mission and vision.

The Climate of Trust and Learning (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, pp. 219, 203)

The social and emotional initiatives at Renetta Elementary School were intended to provide a foundation for elevated positive relationships between staff and all students supporting the overall school culture. There was an overall shift in the culture and climate of the school although some of the more specific aspects of a social and emotional initiatives may not have been successful or sustainable at Renetta Elementary. The school environment was more restorative, supportive and inclusive of students. Student demonstrated more successful academic and attendance rates with the shifts in our school culture. However, this came at a cost. During the same time, staff attendance rates decreased. This data point is substantiated with qualitative reflections indicating additional stress and feelings of overwhelming pressure of inclusivity and insight into the reality of life for students. Kouzes and Posner (2012) continuously refer to vision and values in their Five Practices for Exemplary Leaders. Grounding myself more on the visions and values of the school represented a transference in my practice as I acknowledged the desire for modeling the values I advocated for by practicing what I preached- walking the talk. Often discussed in literature as being essential to effective leadership (Collins, 2001; Fullan, 2010), I had to have an unyielding focus on those areas that I regarded essential for my school and where I could affect change. Now, many teachers at Renetta Elementary start their day with talking and/or peace circles at least once a week. All classrooms to varying degrees have some form of a calming element and student empowerment. This relationship-centered practice allows students a chance

to voice what might be on their minds and gives teachers a chance to learn about their students on a deeper level. These practices also support student's ability to self-regulate their emotions while creating connections with the school and classroom community. In this same frame, teacher team meetings began with a Calm Classroom, mindfulness practice and/ or positive praise. Calm Classroom techniques and mindfulness are expectations in every classroom along with Second Step lessons weekly to support students with social and emotional skill development. I take the time weekly to highlight positives and thank staff in my weekly staff update and state our mission and vision daily on the announcements with a moment of mindfulness to begin each day to ensure school-wide focus. Parent communications have included supportive opportunities of these practices at home as well. These small acts of Modeling the Way (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) set the tone for a school climate that is focused on relationships and the social-emotional growth of our students and school community. While Kouzes and Posner name these actions as important for high quality leadership, Fullan (2010) addresses them as being essential to the change process. More specifically, Fullan notes that leaders must have a "constant and consistent clear message" (p. 36) and focus on "a small number of core priorities" (p. 55). The school team at Renetta Elementary established four core priorities of focus for the 2018-2019 school year behind a single theme to "Polish Our Imperfections." I created a school environment focused on these specific improved outcomes for students by modeling this consistent message and focus through my daily work and communications with my staff and students. Additionally, it is difficult to determine how much of the school climate is a direct result of the social and emotional curriculums due to the robust nature and context of a school environment.

However, the act of self-study has allowed me to hone in on those aspects of leadership that I have become more purposeful and intentional about in the past couple of years. New students entered our school with perceived reputations from their previous schools in the latter half of the data collection period. Due to the cultural shifts in the school community this group of students were accepted into our environment in a more inclusive manner than I think they would have been in years past. The students and families were introduced to the administrative team and given personal tours, met the main office staff, the counselor, and the RP Coach. These introductions allowed our school team to determine interests, strengths, challenges and goals. This beneficial information was passed along to the teacher teams who were then provided with the personal advantage of knowledge for this group of students as they began their new school. This also allowed teachers to know and see a model from the administrative team to be more inclusive and information seeking. These students were not model citizens of our school environment since their arrival to Renetta Elementary. However, they also did not exhibit to the same extent or severity the behaviors indicated and displayed in their past records. Although still challenging, this is most certainly a small win to be acknowledged and celebrated. This is also further evidence that the culture at Renetta Elementary is more receptive and responsive to the individual needs of our families and students. Again, this was supported with elevated student attendance and NWEA assessment results. As indicated by Myers and Pianta (2008) in their research around the idea that student teacher relationships really are the key to student development, “A sizable literature provides evidence that strong and supportive relationships between students and teachers are fundamental to the healthy development of all students in schools” (as cited in Birch &

Ladd, 1997, p. 601). Another key ingredient to the success of Renetta School moving forward will be staff facilitated clubs and activities that properly compensate staff for their time and allow additional non-academic opportunities to enhance relationships in a more social experience. In addition, Hughes and Chen suggest that, “teacher-student relationships form the basis of the social context in which learning takes place” thereby suggesting that the teacher-student relationships should, to some degree, be viewed as foundational to student development (as cited in Liberante, 2012, p. 7).

Implications on My Leadership

The lessons learned from initiating the implementation of social and emotional initiatives, then rethinking and adjusting these programs has certainly underscored the importance of my practice. The awareness of generating buy-in and practicing shared decision making is abundantly researched in the area of leadership studies and this would seem almost too obvious to also identify that conclusion from this self-study. Multiple times throughout my reflective journal I noted that I needed to modify how the initiatives was being implemented, or slow down, taking a step back due to the risk of teachers only being compliant and not genuinely engaging in meaningful work with the initiatives to sustain meaningful relationships. I also recognized the need to determine opportunities to treat staff like professionals. This treatment could be shown through the support rendered, compensation provided or guidance in professional development. Each decision I was working towards a shared vision for the staff ensuring that absent a “curriculum” that staff would put relationships first in their classrooms and purposefully get to know and support even the most challenging students. I had always worked to create buy-in by being transparent with decision-making and eliciting feedback from

stakeholders. However, during this process I had to do more. I quickly realized that I needed to change the mindsets of the staff and I could only do that if I was willing to let go of the aspects of the initiatives that staff resisted and were not necessarily vital, such as weekly documentation of SEL implementations. If it wasn't going to be doable, it wasn't going to be done with fidelity. This process is important to leading change in an organization as some say, what gets monitored gets done. While I can easily be caught in the trap of viewing these adjustments and modifications as failure of my original plan, it actually reflects an approach to continuous improvement (Spiro, 2011). Once I began to engage in a more open and flexible approach, I began to see a shift the teacher's practice and attitudes. This led to the point where we were able to see success and build upon those successes- small wins. The importance of small wins and early success can be found in a wealth of leadership and change theories. In her specific step-by-step plan for leading change, Spiro identifies securing early wins as step five of eight in the change process noting that they must be observable and symbolic. Collins (2001) calls this the flywheel, those successes and results that start small but begin to build momentum, building commitment from others. As I took the time to purposefully step back and look for progress I could see where we had made a difference for some really challenging students, where those students were almost transformed after several months or a year of their teachers and another school staff being persistent, not giving up on them. As someone who was much more likely to identify what wasn't going right than what was (advancement in my leadership), I need to constantly remind myself the power of small wins and celebrating and recognizing successes- validating people for their efforts became a consistent leadership action. Without doing this I ran the risk of losing

momentum, losing commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2012), and stopping the flywheel (Collins, 2001).

Given the opportunity to begin these initiatives all over again, there are several changes I would make to the initial design and implementation of social and emotional curriculums. The most significant of these would be to frontload training for my staff to build their capacity and competence with utilizing social and emotional strategies to develop more robust relationships with students. While I frequently discussed the attitude of teachers who did not see this as a part of their role as a teacher, I did not stop to consider that this might be due to the fact that it was not a part of their formal education preparation. As a student and student teacher myself, there was hardly a course on classroom management, let alone one that taught me to connect with challenging and challenged students. The productive and successful changes that I did see take place at Renetta Elementary over the past couple of years were a result of the continued professional development that we provided on Restorative Practices including talking circles and restorative conversations. Although these took place outside the planned initiative and focus of the self-study, I can draw clear connections between this training that the teachers were engaged in and the growth in their relationships in the classroom. This solidified for me the need to build capacity and actively provide my staff with the tools and resources that they needed to be effective developers of relationships to their students. Kouzes and Posner (2012) suggest developing competence and confidence in order to Enable Others to Act. At first, I successfully did neither. I may have been challenging my staff, but I was not providing them the skills to achieve that challenge. In order to build this capacity, I needed to provide more direct training, frequent modeling,

and timely feedback. Fullan (2010) offers an interesting justification for capacity building, a cycle of improvement and commitment to an outcome such as teacher-student relationships that comes from good practice. He writes that “good practice produces commitment; committed people pursue even better practices” (p. 47). This type of consistent and purposeful professional development would have contributed to teachers being even more committed to the search of strong relationships and perhaps to the program itself.

Recommendations of Research

Outside the field of teacher preparation, self-study is not a common methodology. However, for this researcher it is a transformative process. This honest and critically reflective approach to leadership can offer several next steps for research within the infusion of school social and emotional initiatives and leadership development. My leadership journey revealed through this self-study is uniquely personal to me. The reflective and responsive leadership that I engaged in as results of this self-study certainly had an impact on how I made my leadership decisions, improved on my leadership abilities and grew as an individual. Although personal, it does offer some insights on how leaders can be effective in responding to similar student and staff needs within a school setting. My role as a school principal, especially in the overwhelming City of Chicago, doesn’t often present the luxury of time. The routine of this self-study forced me to reflect and debrief about decisions, experiences, successes and failures. This helped to support a great need in my leadership to engage in this reflective inquiry more frequently. This processes allowed me to slow down the pressure packed, mouse wheel inevitable based on the nature of the work. Lyons et al. (2013) promote reflective inquiry

as a transformative learning process. My journey would support this notion and certainly this type of learning and personal growth should not stop with the formal act of self-study ending.

Transformational school leaders provide a mission centered focus on setting directions, a performance centered focus on developing people, and a culture centered focus on redesigning the organization (Hallinger, 2003; Lashway, cited in Smith & Piele, 2006; pp. 93-94; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003). This research reveals that transformational school leaders develop a shared vision for the school, build consensus around key priorities, hold high expectations, provide support, model appropriate values and build collaborative cultures and shared leadership. More specifically, transformational school leadership has positive effects on school culture (e.g., Barnett & McCormick, 2004), teacher commitment, teacher job satisfaction (e.g., Bolger, 2001), changed teacher practices (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2004), planning and strategies for change (e.g., Leithwood, Aitken, & Jantzi, 2001), pedagogical or instructional quality, (e.g., Marks & Printy, 2003), organizational learning (e.g., Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002), collective teacher efficacy (e.g., Ross, 2004), and student engagement (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2003). Each of these transformational aspects are now more prevalent at Renetta School. Equally important and personal to this practitioner are these same core values.

I would like to propose three recommendations for both existing administrators as well as those contemplating or preparing to enter leadership positions as I conclude what has been an empowering personal journey. The first recommendation I propose is to keenly focus on our why. Educational leaders must remain conscious of why you

decided (or are contemplating) to become an educator or leader in the first place. I have a hard time believing educators enter the profession because their primary goals were to provide grades and deliver curriculum. We are passionate and compassionate by nature if we enter this field and appealing to this is vital. I don't mean to negate the professional responsibility of teachers, but it is important to remember that there is so much more to teaching than just delivering curriculum and assigning grades. As leaders, we must remain grounded in the mindset of a teacher and model an elevated mission centered focus. The extremely high levels of interaction required by educators to meet the needs, emotions, and desires of such a dynamic range of scholars and staff makes teaching and leading the most uniquely challenging occupation. This requires caring at the most basic of human levels- it demands time, patience and understanding. I have witnessed teachers blessed with relationship-building skills as well as those who may have lost some perspective; forgetting those personal reasons for choosing a career to educate the youth of our society. By remembering the driving forces behind one's decision to become an educator, one is more apt to hold a healthy perspective on learning that, in the long run, benefits everyone.

For my second recommendation, I refer back to the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership by Kouzes and Posner (2012). I want to inspire other educators to strive to be individuals who enable human growth, creating environments that allow individuals to maximize their potential. One of many things I have come to learn from my reflective journey is that teachers need to feel genuinely supported with the heavy burden of educating our youth. The school community must be given the resources and supports necessary to engage in the work of social and emotional development through staff

empowerment and buy in with shared decision making opportunities. Thus, creating an environment of trust and dignity, Enabling Others to Act (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Critically important in this process is leadership credibility.

Finally, I have come to discover that by applying research into my own practice, I have witnessed a significant improvement in the climate of the school. I strongly recommend that whether you are a practicing leader, or aspiring to be one, you immerse yourself in the current literature with an open mind and read the findings made by prominent researchers such as Kouzes and Posner, and others. I have observed teacher's ability to trust one another and share their practice with one another- collaboratively opening their doors and removing the notions of teaching in isolation. The demands and weight of educating our youth through personal and societal challenges is unforgiving and overwhelming. As leaders, we must alleviate some of these pressures bestowed upon staff and the school community. Equally important is the time needed to take care of ourselves in that process. Personally, I now have an elevated desire to come to work each day. I have a renewed and invigorating optimism for the educational future of our scholars. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with and build positive relationships with current and future school stakeholder. These relationships are the foundation for growth. My professional purpose and leadership desire have been fully established after this powerfully reflective journey. My professional purpose is to illuminate one's confidence to accelerate and maximize their potential. My leadership desire is to support the creation of an environment in which every staff member is engaged in creating an extraordinary educational experience realizing the gift of every scholar, colleague and community member.

Limitations

The methodology of self-study poses several limitations requiring the researcher to build trust with the reader (LaBoskey, 2004) through an honest assessment of what worked and didn't work in the specific research setting. It is imperative that I acknowledge that this may not extend to other schools or individual leaders. Content presented in the self-study reflects a specificity unique to my personal context. I offer the following limitations to this study in order to offer most beneficial insight for other educational practitioners, researchers and leaders. Throughout the duration of this self-study period, Chicago Public Schools went through radical yearly budget cuts, city-wide and local school racial challenges, engaged in drawn-out contract negotiations with the teacher's union, and accepted political battles in the fight for fair school funding. Certainly, it is true for the program at Renetta Elementary that these realities did affect the everyday nature within the school building. Although these were not made an emphasis of my reflections or findings, it would be naive to assume that these barriers did not affect staff morale and my own ability to dedicate time and energy to the initiatives.

Additionally, the staff that I was engaging with during this leadership self-study was the same staff I was responsible for supervising and evaluating. Therefore, this study does not consider the perspectives or opinions of teachers, staff, or students regarding the transformational leader behaviors or emotional and social competencies of the principal. Further, the study does not attempt to link the attributes and behaviors of the principal to student achievement, organizational performance, or other outcomes in schools. Ethically rationalizing, this limited my ability to stimulate staff perspective, or the perspective of the students as sources of information as functions of my reflections. I

was not able to directly engage staff members in interviews or observations that would be specific to this study. Instead I invited conversations and dialog during team meetings in an effort to check my assumptions consistent or not with reflections. Each of these aforementioned limitations should be considered as part of future research on principals and the relationship between social and emotional competence and transformational school leadership.

Concluding Thoughts

I could have viewed the social and emotional initiatives as failures since they didn't fully produce what was initially planned. Ultimately, the transformation reflected smart leadership decisions made in the best interest of the students and school community. After years identifying a need for improved relationships at Renetta Elementary I am left with successes, disappointments, and most definitely lessons learned. I can say with confidence that the staff are more responsive to the needs of all students within their classrooms and that those students who need extra support and care are receiving that within the school environment. What has been important and highly successful is finding a way to meet the needs of the students of Renetta Elementary in a manner that is sustainable and meaningful. I can also say with confidence that I am a stronger leader and more prepared to continue to foster positive relationships within any building through ensuring that the school climate and culture is responsive and restorative. I am a more confident and capable school leader because of this study of self.

APPENDIX A

SELF-STUDY DATA PROTOCOLS JOURNAL PROMPTS

Below is a list of possible journal prompts. I will use these questions as my frame for reflecting on my ability to support the development of teacher-student relationships that positively impact student achievement.

Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership	Journal Prompts
Model the Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How have I clarified expectations in connection to the school vision and mission? ● How have staff members or I modeled the way in line with our school mission to develop relationships?
Inspire a Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What examples for the future have been created, discussed or realized?
Challenge the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe initiatives or empowerment opportunities provide or enlisted by staff members? ● What small wins were evident to forge positive relationships?
Enable Others to Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How has trust been observed or promoted? ● What professional learning opportunities took place or were provided for staff to pursue the mission of the school?
Encourage the Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe recognitions that were given today? ● What celebrations were observed to promote positive relationships? The school mission?

Source: Kouzes Posner International Copyright 2009.

APPENDIX B

STUDY AND IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership	Ten Commitments of Leadership	Activity	Month
Model the Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify values by finding your voice and affirming shared values. [L] [SEP] Set the example by aligning actions with shared values. 	Critical friend interview #1 Data review Reflective Journaling	March, 2018
Inspire a Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations. 	Reflective Journaling Second Step Implementation	April, 2018
Challenge the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and looking outward for innovative ways to improve. Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience. [L] [SEP] 	Critical friend interview #2 Reflective Journaling	May, 2018
Enable Others to Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships. Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence. [L] [SEP] 	Critical interview #3 Compile and review data Reflective Journaling	July, 2018
Encourage the Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence. Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community. 	Planning and preparation for the 2018-2019 School year and staff development. Reflective Journaling	August, 2018
Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership		Reflective Journaling	September/ October, 2018

Source: Kouzes Posner International Copyright 2009.

APPENDIX C

SELF-STUDY DATA PROTOCOLS SEMI-STRUCTURED

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A critical friend will ask the following questions including follow up questions where appropriate. These interviews will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

1. Tell me about the school atmosphere so far. <i>*What do you see, hear, and experience in the school? What don't you see and hear?</i>
2. What successes have you experienced? Describe these positive outcomes? <i>*What are the clues that reveal the school's culture? What behaviors get rewarded?</i>
3. What challenges or obstacles have you experienced?
4. What would you have done differently up to this point?
5. What have you learned about yourself as a leader? <i>*Do the adults model the behaviors they expect of our scholars? Who gets to make the decisions?</i>
6. How have you seen your leadership change? <i>*Do parents experience welcome, suspicion, or rejection when they enter the school?</i>

*Barth, 2002

APPENDIX D
DOCUMENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

The following is a protocol that will be used to analyze pertinent documents collected throughout this self-study and in reflection upon how I am supporting the development of positive relationships impacting the school culture.

Document being analyzed (circle/highlight one):

Grade level/ Team Meeting Agenda

Grade level/ Team Meeting Minutes

Professional Learning Survey

5 Essentials Survey

Publically Available Student Data: NWEA On-Track/ Off-Track Attendance
Discipline

Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP)

Reflective Journal

Critical Friend Transcript

Specific description of the document being analyzed:

1. How does the document reflect the importance of relationships? Relationships between whom?

Evidence:

2. What does the document inform me about how teachers are forming supportive relationships with students?

Evidence:

3. How does the document inform me the needs of students? Of teachers? Of the school community?

Evidence:

4. How does the document highlight changes in teacher-student relationships?

Evidence:

5. How does the document highlight successes or challenges that teachers are experiencing?

Evidence:

6. How does the document highlight success or challenges in my leadership?

Evidence:

7. What, if any of “The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership are evident in this document?

Evidence:

APPENDIX E
CONSULTANCY PROTOCOL



Consultancy Protocol

Developed by Faith Dunne, Paula Evans, and Gene Thompson-Grove as part of their work at the Coalition of Essential Schools and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

Purpose

The structure of the Consultancy helps presenters think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma. The Consultancy protocol has 2 main purposes – to develop participants' capacity to see and describe the dilemmas that are the essential material of their work, and to help each other understand and deal with them.

Time

Approximately 50 minutes

Roles

Presenter (whose work is being discussed by the group)

Facilitator (who sometimes participates, depending on the size of the group)

Consultants

Outside perspective is critical to the effectiveness of this protocol; therefore, some of the participants in the group should be people who do not share the presenter's specific dilemma at that time. The Consultancy group is typically a small and intimate one – from 4-7 people. Larger groups can easily subdivide into consultancy groups.

Process

1. The presenter gives an overview of the dilemma with which she/he is struggling, and frames a question for the consultancy group to consider. The framing of this question, as well as the quality of the presenter's reflection on the dilemma being discussed, are key features of this protocol. If the presenter has brought student work, educator work, or other "artifacts," there is a pause here to silently examine the work/documents. The focus of the group's conversation is on the dilemma. (10-15 minutes if there are artifacts to examine)
2. The consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter — that is, questions that have brief, factual answers. (5 minutes)
3. The group asks probing questions of the presenter (See Pocket Guide to Probing Questions). These questions should be worded so that they help the presenter clarify and expand her/his thinking about the dilemma presented to the consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question she/he framed and to do some analysis of the dilemma presented. The presenter responds to the group's questions, although sometimes a probing question might ask the presenter to see the dilemma in such a novel way that the response is simply, "I never thought about it that way." There is no discussion by the consultancy group of the presenter's responses. At the end of the 10 minutes, the facilitator asks the presenter to re-state her/his question for the group. (10 minutes)

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community and facilitated by a skilled facilitator. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for facilitation, please visit the School Reform Initiative website at www.schoolreforminitiative.org.

4. The group talks with each other about the dilemma presented. In this step, the group works to define the issues more thoroughly and objectively. Sometimes members of the group suggest actions the presenter might consider taking; if they do, these should be framed as “open suggestions,” and should be made only after the group has thoroughly analyzed the dilemma. The presenter doesn’t speak during this discussion, but listens in and takes notes. The group talks about the presenter in the third person. (15 minutes)

Possible questions to frame the discussion:

- What did we hear?
 - What didn’t we hear that might be relevant?
 - What assumptions seem to be operating?
 - What questions does the dilemma raise for us?
 - What do we think about the dilemma?
 - What might we do or try if faced with a similar dilemma? What have we done in similar situations?
5. The presenter reflects on what she/he heard and on what she/he is now thinking, sharing with the group anything that particularly resonated for him or her during any part of the Consultancy. (5 minutes)
 6. The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group’s observation of the Consultancy process. (5 minutes)

Note: See Consultancy Dilemmas to craft dilemmas for use with the Consultancy Protocol and Facilitation Tips for process advice.

APPENDIX F
SUCCESS PROTOCOL ANALYSIS



Success Analysis Protocol For Individuals

Developed by Gene Thompson Grove from earlier versions by Vivian Johnson.

Purpose

In the spirit of appreciative inquiry,* share professional successes with colleagues in order to gain insight into the conditions that lead to those successes, so participants can do more of what works.

Roles

A facilitator who keeps time, helps participants move through the process, and also participates as both a presenter and a group member. The facilitator's role is to help the group to keep focused on how the success described by the presenter is different from more routine work.

Each person takes a turn as a presenter describing a success, and listening as the group does an analysis of the conditions that have led to that success.

Group members listen to each presenter, and work collaboratively to extend and/or deepen each presenter's thinking.

**Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry*

1. In every society, organization or group, something works.
2. What we focus on becomes our reality.
3. Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.
4. The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.
5. People have more confidence and comfort to travel to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
7. It is important to value differences.
8. The language we use creates our reality.

"Success" is defined as something that proved to be highly effective in achieving an outcome important to the presenter.

Process

1. Identify a Success

Write a short description of a success in some arena of your professional practice. Describe the specifics of the success. Be sure to answer the question, "What made this different from others like it that I have had?"

You might choose a success that surprised you, or that you haven't already analyzed on your own, or that you would like to get others' thinking about. It doesn't have to be a large success — people learn a lot in this exercise from relatively "small" successes as well. (5-10 minutes)

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community and facilitated by a skilled facilitator. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for facilitation, please visit the School Reform Initiative website at www.schoolreforminitiative.org.

2. Presenter Describes the Success

In triads, the first presenter tells the story of his or her success, in as much detail as she/he can remember. The group takes notes. (5 minutes)

3. Group Asks Clarifying Questions

The rest of the group asks clarifying questions about the details of the success in order to fill in any information the group needs to be helpful to the presenter. (2-3 minutes)

4. Group Reflects on the Success Story

Group members discuss what they heard the presenter say, and offer additional insights and analysis of the success. The presenter is silent and takes notes. (5-7 minutes)

5. Presenter Reflects

The presenter reflects on the group's discussion about what made this so successful. The group then discusses briefly how what they have learned might be applied to all of their work. (2-3 minutes)

6. Process Begins Again for the Next Group Member

Repeat Steps 2 through 6 for each member of the group. Remember to keep the focus on the underlying principles or processes that made for success.

7. Share Success Factors

The Triad identifies and lists the factors that contributed to their successes, and shares this in the large group. The large group looks for trends across triads, and then discusses what it would mean to consciously create conditions that lead to success.

8. Debrief the Process

What worked well? What would we do differently next time?

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VITA

Sean McNichols is the second of three children of Tim and Joann McNichols. He was born in Elgin, Illinois on October 3, 1978. He was raised in the town of Carpentersville, Illinois. He now resides in Chicago, Illinois with his wife and four sons.

Sean McNichols graduated from Barrington High School before earning his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago while being a Division I athlete. He then went on to earn two Master's Degrees in Educational Administration and Supervision (2006) and later in Curriculum and Instruction (2011).

Sean McNichols has been in the field of education for almost 20 years serving in the capacity of a teacher, Dean, Acting Assistant Principal, Assistant Principal, Resident Principal and Principal. His experiences have provided opportunities at the elementary, middle and high school levels as a teacher and administrator. Currently, he is a middle school principal in Oak Lawn, Illinois.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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